Applying to Law School
A general information packet for interested juniors and seniors

**Introduction**

As an undergraduate, you should not be overly concerned with law school application until the second term of your junior year.  Any real attention paid to it prior to that time is probably wasted energy and only anxiety-producing.  Needless to say, some attention should be paid to your grades, which will be pretty well established by the end of your junior year.

By that time, you should take stock of your general qualifications for law school application.  Foremost at that time would be your overall grade average (GPA). As a general rule, you should maintain a minimum overall grade average of 3.40 by the end of your first term in your senior year to be eligible for at least second tier law schools, and your grades over your junior and senior years should reflect a gradual increase rather than a leveling off or gradual decline. A large number of students change majors after their freshman or sophomore years produced mediocre grades, and their real current performance abilities would be reflected in their most recent semesters. Naturally, your score on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT, discussed below) is equally if not more important, and a higher percentile scoring on the LSAT can in some circumstances compensate for a lower overall GPA. But you should not count on that, especially if you have specific law schools you are interested in. Students with an overall grade average below 3.40 will have to do very well on the LSAT to move into consideration at many law schools and might well also consider alternative avenues of graduate study or career directions or look into paralegal programs. Solid, reputable post-graduate paralegal programs, such as the one offered by Duquesne, are also fairly competitive - a 2.75 GPA is about the minimum for applying to those types of programs.

An overall GPA of 3.40 or above will place you into minimal consideration only. Most competitive undergraduates have a GPA in the 3.50-3.70 range and have a fairly diversified academic background, having completed a dual major, a minor, a certificate program, or a study abroad experience, and are active in campus organizations However, a high GPA will get you nowhere if you have mediocre score on the LSAT. A standard rule might be that a minimum of 40th percentile would be needed for application to the least competitive law schools.  Law schools in Pennsylvania tend to require a somewhat higher minimum than that - around the 55th-to-90th percentile.

Don't be fooled by rumors that despite poor grades, someone got into law school because he had 'pull.' Basically, your grades and LSAT scores place you into consideration.  If you don't have the minimum levels of either, it doesn't matter if you are class president, dorm queen, or have a father on the Board. In fact, admissions committees tend to establish their minimum application thresholds over a period of years as a predictor of first-year law school performance. Granted, standardized tests like the LSAT do not reveal the ‘whole person' or how one might respond to the academic demands of first year law school, and that is why a number of law schools place greater marginal emphasis on grade performance and rigor of course selection. All this should dissuade you from hoping that a sudden and perhaps unexpectedly high LSAT score would overcome a three years of modest grades. Truth be known, there is often a pretty good correlation between one's grade profile (assuming it reflects a range of rigorous courses) and one's LSAT score, and unless the LSAT scores is fairly high, a law school admissions committee may or may not give more consideration to grade performance, course rigor, curriculum diversity, or other intangibles such as working part-time or high student activity responsibilities. Most admissions committees value a minimum threshold score on the LSAT, and while they may admit a candidate with a higher LSAT and a lower grade profile, they are just as likely to admit a candidate with a lower LSAT and a higher grade profile with other positive ‘intangibles.’

**Taking and interpreting the LSAT**

The LSAT is designed to measure skills that are considered essential for success in law school: the reading and comprehension of complex texts with accuracy and insight; the organization and management of information and the ability to draw reasonable inferences from it; the ability to think critically; and the analysis and evaluation of the reasoning and arguments of others.

 Most importantly, the sections are not testing your knowledge but rather your reasoning skills under time constraints. The online site LSAC provides a comprehensive walk-through of the exam, its various sections, sample exams, and test-taking strategies.

The composition and dates of upcoming LSAT exams are described in detail on the LSAC website. The LSAT has been changed a number of times over the last two decades, most recently in June 2024 to three sections of multiple-choice questions (two in logical reasoning and one in reading comprehension) and an unscored argumentative writing exercise. Sample exams are provided at LSAC.

Law schools strongly urge you take the first LSAT offered in the testing cycle, usually June between your junior and senior years, and make application during the fall of your senior year. Scores from the LSAT are usually reported within four weeks, allowing you several alternative courses of action:

* If your score is *good* (around 85th percentile and above), you may spend the fall considering which schools to apply to, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each. See the section on strategizing below.
* If your score is *average to marginal* (50th-60th percentile), you may want to retake the exam to see if you can do better.  Some who retake the LSAT do better, most don't - most simply duplicate their previous score and some even score lower.  Some law schools average LSAT scores for those who retake, some simply take the highest score.  For those law schools that establish a minimum LSAT score for consideration, you might want to retake the LSAT just to shoot for that minimum. Approximately 35 ABA-approved law schools consider applicants in the 45th-60th percentile range, but only a few are in the mid-Atlantic region and few in Pennsylvania tend to consider applicants with lower than 60th percentile.  There are a large number of law schools in the Mid-Atlantic region that would consider LSAT scores in the 50th-60th percentile competitive. You can strategize which law schools fall within your competitive range by seeing median scores at LSAC or by consulting one of several ‘law school predictor’ site. Law schools are required to provide profiles of recent admission classes, which will give you the 25th-75th percentile (middle ground) admissions for that school.
* If your score is *lower than 40th percentile*, you should definitely consider retaking the LSAT, attempting to achieve a big jump in your score - this has been done by some students, but most simply duplicate their first score within one or two points.  You should also consider taking a LSAT preparation course (e.g. Kaplan) before retaking the exam, or alternatively redirecting your career options into other fields, including paralegal training.

What you consider an adequate score depends on the 25th-75th percentile profile of the schools you are considering. If you have a 153 LSAT and a 3.5 GPA, that may be more than sufficient for the law schools you prefer; it would not be for others. And the LSAT may not be a reliable indicator of whether you are capable of doing first-year law school work.  Some individuals perform brilliantly on standardized exams and others do not.  The point is that the LSAT is what law school admissions committees use to interpret the analytical skill capabilities of potential first-year law students, as a hedge against trying to interpret different grade averages from different undergraduate colleges and universities. However, in recent years schools have given increased weight to grade profiles, curriculum selection and difficulty, and non-academic circumstances, recognizing that those may give indications of successful performance as well.

**Whether to go to law school, and if so, which one?**

Students with excellent qualifications and students with marginal qualifications always end up asking the same question at the end - which school do I really want to go to?  For students with highly competitive qualifications, the choices are wider, and they should consider such things as (a) size of student body, (b) availability of specialty courses, (c) opportunity for work experience while in school, (d) placement patterns for graduates, and (e) sheer cost. Also, a major consideration might be the setting and climate of the law school -- Is it small and self-contained? Is it within a major state university? Is it in a warm clime? Is it near the shore? Does it have good snow for skiing? These may seem frivolous issues, but remember, you'll be there for three years - this is a major relocation. For this reason, I strongly urge you to **visit** each school in which you have a serious interest while it is in session, talk to faculty and students, get a feel for each place before you make a decision.

Students with less competitive qualifications should not be dismayed, since a number of good law schools will consider them competitive. While their options definitely will be narrower, there are more than 150 accredited law schools in the United States, and a number are looking for students with those qualifications. This is even more the case post-COVID when the law market downsized and fewer college graduates took the LSAT or applied to law schools. Law school enrollments dropped an estimated 15-20 per cent as fewer students matriculated, especially in the less competitive schools (the top 25 remained and still remain full and have hefty waiting lists). Most law schools responded in three ways: (1) to expand the marketability of their graduates by offering more skills- and experience-based courses in the curriculum, (2) by reducing the size of the entering freshman class, thus making admission more competitive in those schools, and/or (3) reduced the baseline numbers on minimally-acceptable LSAT scores and grade averages, thus making admission possible if not likely in some schools that five years ago would have rejected their admission outright.

For you to turn away from law school because "the market is terrible" implies you are considering the choice of graduate study direction based on what you anticipate the market for its graduates will be 3-5 years in the future - how can you know that? If you really want to study law, and many do, then by all means explore it - carefully - and do not artificially narrow your options. More often than not, a student artificially narrows the schools he/she is interested in for non-academic reasons peculiar to him/her, e.g. by having a preference for staying close to home, having a life-long dream of attending a particular school, etc. On occasion, I have seen a student who wanted to stay in-state apply only to Pittsburgh, Dickinson, Duquesne, and Temple, and then got rejected at all of them, never once considering schools in neighboring states or outside the region at which his/her chances for admission were much better.  If there are only certain law schools you are willing to consider, then you may paint yourself into a corner if you don't gain admission and don't have a fallback position. The question becomes - do you want to go to law school or only go to a particular law school? Look around!  There are many good law schools in many parts of the United States.

Finally, the law schools you apply to should be reasonable choices.  Applying to a law school that is far beyond the competitiveness of your credentials is often a waste of your time (filling out applications), the time of professors (from whom you request recommendation letters), and money (each application accompanied by an application processing fee which some schools waive to attract application by more competitive students).  Carefully consider whether you would actually attend the law schools to which you apply - if you are accepted at Yale or Penn, are you prepared to actually matriculate and bear the costs there over three years? And if not, why are you applying? Just to see if you can get in? Be prepared to justify your choices to professors and parents since they are the ones bearing some of the burden of your applications.

Selection of which law schools to apply to is a tricky business. Reputation, cost, location, size are all considerations. Curriculum is also a key variable - all law schools offer the same basic 1-L core of courses, but what else do they offer, particularly in the second and third years? If you really do your homework, some factors will often stand out, including:

* State universities. Major state universities, supported by annual appropriations from state taxpayers, tend to set aside a large portion of their seats in the freshman class for in-state students. A casual look at the admission profile of law schools like the University of Texas or the University of Illinois may reveal only moderate competitiveness of the average admit - a range in which you may consider yourself very competitive. But the overall profile does not reveal the profile of accepted out-of-state students, who are vying for a much smaller number of seats and for which the competition is more intense. Also notice if there is a tuition differential between in-state and out-of-state students. The same is true of state-supported private universities, such as the University of Pittsburgh or Penn State
* Tuition and financial aid. Like it or not, this is a major if not the major consideration for most students. Tuition and fees at most law schools are very expensive, in addition to which there are incidental costs (such as room and board, books, etc.) and, assuming you will be a full-time student (not working part-time), you are easily in the $45,000 + range per year. Rounding up, it may cost you $150,000 to complete three years of law school at a public university. Is there financial aid available? Yes, but less often for freshmen students than for upperclassmen. Your chances for financial aid increase as your credentials - especially your LSAT score - rise above the average for a school's projected freshman class, i.e. if you are applying to a less competitive law school. Other sources of financial aid for first-year law students typically include parents and loans (many students are already burdened by loans from their undergraduate degree program). If you are seeking admission to law at a private university, expect tuition and fees to be higher than for an in-state public university. And don't forget room, board and books.
* Specialties**.** Students often want to know if a law school specializes in an area of law they are interested in, e.g. international, communication, environmental, or intellectual property law (these are ‘hot' these days). The truth is that the curriculum in your first two years in law school is fairly set, and unless you become enamored with civil procedure, property, or contract law, course selection to follow your interests must await third year electives. Even then, selecting a law school based on availability of course work in a specialty area requires some in-depth investigation. Since most law schools offer some course work in many specialty areas, do your homework! Does a law school have courses in the specialty area? Does it publish a journal in that area? Does it have a Center or Joint Center in which research in that area is conducted? Does it have an outreach program in which one can gain practical experience prior to graduation? Such homework, dutifully done, would reveal that about a number of law schools really focus on [environmental issues](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Calexander%5CDocuments%5CZZ%20Other%20folders%5CWeb%20Site%20%28do%20not%20erase%29%5Cweb%202013%20%28current%29%5CPrelaw%20information%5Cenvironmentallaw.html) and others in intellectual property and media  [law](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Calexander%5CDocuments%5CZZ%20Other%20folders%5CWeb%20Site%20%28do%20not%20erase%29%5Cweb%202013%20%28current%29%5CPrelaw%20information%5Ctelecommunicationlaw.html).
* Intangibles. Smaller and private law schools are very competitive, yet sometimes accept a few more marginally competitive applicants who might give their freshman class diversity in background, e.g. it may seem attractive to an admissions committee that an applicant is from a small town in Western Pennsylvania as opposed to larger city, or is in the dance ensemble, or participated in missionary projects.
* Transfers. Law schools accept a few students transferring in after completing their freshman year elsewhere, but not many. It is however an option to consider if you are not accepted at your most preferred law school outright.
* Practice. Most undergraduates do not look beyond admission to law school, setting as their goal simply 'getting in.' They seldom consider in which fields of law they might practice, or where they might wish to practice. This is not unusual, since most undergraduates are not savvy to the fields of study or practice in law. A table identifying where Pitt-Johnstown political science graduates received their*juris doctor* degree and where they ended up practicing law is attached to the file Prelaw at Pitt-Johnstown.
* Placement rates. In their promotional materials, law schools often showcase their most stellar graduates and typically report employment placement rates in general terms based on surveys of recent graduation classes. Be careful how you read these reports - reports are almost always based on informal surveys returned by graduates, usually the 25-30% of graduates in any given class who are happy to report good placement. So a 96% placement rate may reflect 96% of the 25% who self-reported. That is still accurate, but not necessarily the whole picture and casual readers may read too much into the reports and think that law school somehow guarantees good post-graduation placement. In fact, graduate placement in law is very highly competitive, and the key to successful placement may be top grades and significant practical experience gained in law school, e.g. externships, certificates in certain practical fields, etc. This type of credentialism has become in most cases a deciding factor in hirings. It is fairly well-known that many new law graduates take part-time or law-related researching or documenting positions for an interim period before finding a permanent position - perhaps for a year or more - and those are also considered law-related placements. Generally new graduates find job-hunting tough, especially if they are less mobile, i.e. want to stay only within a certain area or region. Stories are rife of law school graduates driving taxicabs in New York City rather than looking for career opportunities away from the City. In the last few years, the nadir of the job market for law school graduates after the bust of 2008, there have been many reports of law school graduates with significant indebtedness and either not being well-placed or placed in a non-legal position - this puts them in a grave financial bind and often embittered, mainly toward the law school. So be aware that a law school promises to prepare you for legal placement, i.e. you will be appropriately trained, but cannot promise placement not to mention good placement or placement in the city of your preference, etc. Given the economic downturn and the general shrinkage in employment in the legal profession since 2008-2011, and the resulting high competitiveness that faced those seeking to gain their first job, your best strategy is to seek a law curriculum that will train you well and given you a diversity of practical experience that will be attractive in the job market. Have Pitt-Johnstown graduates who have completed law school in the past three years gotten jobs and are practicing law in Pennsylvania? The answer is yes. Did some gain placement out-of-state? Yes. Where? See table in Prelaw at Pitt-Johnstown.

**The Pitt-Johnstown record of law school acceptance**

We have had a good record of law school admissions for those students applying to schools at which they are competitive. Are Pitt-Johnstown students competitive for law school admissions? The answer is **yes**. Over 120 Pitt-Johnstown political science majors have completed their juris doctor degree and entered practice since 1975. The table below will give you an idea of the range of law schools that have offered admission to Pitt-Johnstown graduates and each successful applicant's LSAT percentile:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 30th-52nd % | 53rd-80th % | 80th+ % |
| Dayton | Pittsburgh | Virginia |
| Toledo | Northwestern | Pennsylvania |
| Ohio Northern | Dickinson | Texas |
| Tulsa | Penn State | Notre Dame |
| Widener Commonwealth | American | Havard |
| Thomas Cooley | Syracuse | Hastings (CA) |
| California Western | Richmond | Georgetown |
| Akron | Temple | Duke |
| Pace | Wake Forest | Michigan |
| Capital (OH) | Case Western | Cornell |
| Drexel | Washington&Lee |  |
|  | Albany |  |
|     \*listed by applicant's LSAT percentile in the year the test was taken |

**An appropriate timetable for applying to law schools**

**In June during the summer prior to your senior year** The best strategy is to take the LSAT in the **summer** (June) sitting. Registration for the current cycle (June through the following April) LSAT is available **on-line** at  [www.LSAC.org](http://www.LSAC.org), the mega-site for the Law School Admission Council (LSAC).   The mechanics of how to register for the exam and for LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS) are all explained on that website.  When you register for the LSAT, you can also register for the CAS and send them an official transcript of your grades through end of junior year. CAS will also compile your letters of recommendation as well. If your grades are not as high as you would hope by the end of your junior year but you believe the fall semester grades from your senior year will improve your application, do not send your transcript in until after fall semester grades are posted. CAS will automatically respond to any law school to which you have applied and send your Report. So be prepared for the costs of application for LSAT, CAS, and for each report sent to law schools, not counting application fees charged by individual schools.

Note that **LSAT preparation courses**, which basically walk you through the mechanics of the exam, the logic behind each of the sections of questions, how to prepare for and anticipate answering these types of questions, and a series of practice exams, are very useful, but most area universities no longer offer such courses. You have several options. First and easiest, check out the LSAT questions site linked above - this is a good place to **start**, as it will expose you to the types of questions you will see. Second, if you want to make the investment, the best, most intensive prep course is offered by **Kaplan** (or check out **PowerScore**) but it tends to be **expensive**. Students have reported that the **Princeton Review**prepares one for basic levels of competitiveness but not at the higher levels, especially in certain sections of the LSAT. Third, you can also study from old LSAT exams available from the LSAC site (**Official LSAT PrepTests** in four versions) or in books sold commercially (like **Barron's**). One recent graduate reported great success in checking the message board at [*www.top-law-schools.com*](http://www.top-law-schools.com) for help in preparing for the LSAT, gauging which prep courses might be most useful, etc. Remember, your LSAT score will largely dictate where and even if you gain admission - preparing for the LSAT is therefore critical to good placement. The more you are committed to preparing for the LSAT, the better the outcome is likely to be.

Also, if it is not possible for you to take the June LSAT (you may be participating in a study abroad program or working full-time), you can simply register for the September exam. If you put off taking the LSAT until December or February, you risk not getting your score back soon enough to adjust your school options or to plan to retake the exam. Also, most law schools have 'rolling admissions,' meaning they admit students progressively starting usually in December or January. If you delay taking (or retaking) the LSAT until February or later, the number of seats available shrinks and the competitiveness for them increases. In certain circumstances, a 'lag' year may be appropriate, i.e. sitting out the year after graduation to study for a retake of the LSAT, optimally with a prep course.

**In August at the start of your senior year**

Carefully consider your LSAT score and the kinds of law schools it may qualify you for.  If you want to retake the LSAT in October, check the deadlines for that in early September. If your LSAT score is satisfactory to you, consider the various law schools you may be interested in by looking at their recent catalogs on-line and begin strategizing your application process (below). You may also want to purchase the **ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools** with your LSAT registration.  All the information in the **Guide** is actually available on-line, including LSAT and grade average profiles from each school's most recently admitted freshman class, allowing you to check how competitive your own profile is against their pattern of admissions. You can then cross-reference this information against each law school's website, which can be directly accessed through the LSAC link mentioned before. You can also refer to the ‘geographical guide' in the **Guide**, a series of regional maps of all law schools across the country, and make a list of law schools that match your interests and qualifications, and their admissions minimums. At this point you will also want to write to or email each of the law schools on your select list and request for information, applications, and financial aid opportunities. You may discover that on-line application may qualify you for a waiver of the usual application fee.

There are three useful **on-line sources** of information that will greatly assist you in strategizing at which law schools you might have a better chance of admission. The first is [*www.top-law-schools.com,*](http://www.top-law-schools.com) mentioned above. It gives you access to a full range of information on individual law schools. Second, a good provider of admissions profiles (numbers, rankings, graphs of applicants recently admitted, etc.) for each law school in which you might have an interest is [*www.lawschoolnumbers.com*](http://www.lawschoolnumbers.com). If you do your homework on this site, you can get a fairly accurate profile of each school’s pattern of admissions qualifications, especially at the competitive margins. Finally, check out [*www.lawschoolpredictor.com*](http://www.lawschoolpredictor.com), a site that allows you to calculate your LSAC standardized grade point average and enter it with your LSAT score into a databank that will then list a probable decision from each law school, ranging from DENY, to WEAK CONSIDER, to CONSIDER, to STRONGLY CONSIDER, to ADMIT. Be careful how you read these listings - a school that comes up "strongly consider" is not a guarantee that it may admit you, nor is it a guarantee that you may be remotely interested in attending that school. Again, do your homework on schools you believe are in your range and consider their tangibles and intangibles. And do not necessarily confine your range to just the 'best bets' - if a school is listed as "weak consider" but in many respects is very desirable from your own point of view, put it on your short list anyway.

**In November of your senior year**

Winnow your list of potential law schools down to 8-10 that cover a range between 'probable' or 'sure-bet' acceptance (see above) to those at which you have a more marginal chance.  Process your application forms to a range of those schools and identify them to CAS to have your credentials sent to them. Personally solicit letters of recommendation from appropriate faculty and others - two or three at most. Most law schools accept letters only through CAS, so letter-writers will be electronically uploading their recommendation letters addressed "To whom it may concern" directly to CAS rather than to each law school individually. Try to have all this done and your own application forms sent in by Thanksgiving if possible. Several cautions:

* If you have already narrowed your **choices** down geographically to only a few schools (e.g. you want to be in or near Pittsburgh), be sure to consider applying to a ‘safety value' school outside that area just in case. Do not however apply to 8-10 schools if you plan to only attend one particular one anyway - that is a waste of everyone's time and your own (application fee) money.
* Application **forms** to law schools are all pretty much the same - all want basic information and most want you to write one or two narrative (personal) essays on subjects ranging from ‘why you want to study of law' to ‘other considerations the admissions committee should take into account'. These essays are **very** important - they are an opportunity to make your case, to demonstrate seriousness, or at least to show the admissions committee you are literate and articulate. Do **not** blow these essays off; do **not** treat them casually. Sloppy, care-less essays are likely to move your application into the ‘wait' or ‘refuse' piles. If you are applying online, these essays will have to be prepared ahead of time and uploaded to the application site. The *top-law-schools* site (above) provides you access to others who will help you prepare your personal statement. Applying on-line will insure some level of neatness, as long as you proof-read the application before you click "send".
* Also, **letters** of recommendation are used by admissions committees to give **texture** to your grade profile. The committee already knows your grades - they have your transcript. What they want to know is what the grades **mean** - the rigor of the courses completed, distinguishing academic work or projects, etc. So, who should write your letters? The answer is as simple as it is reasonable - faculty who are familiar with and can discuss  your work and your abilities in some detail, faculty who have read analytical essays or papers submitted and/or have seen your presentations or supervised your individual projects; in short, faculty who really **know** you. Try to anticipate what a faculty member might write to an admissions committee. If your best realistic anticipation is that the letter that looks something like "Susan took my class and got an A, but other than that I don't know anything about her" - that type of letter will be meaningless. Letters from friends of the family, attorneys you've known in the community, or others outside academe may be generally useful to vouch for your character, but cannot provide clues about your academic capability.
* And, when you ask a faculty member to write a letter, provide him/her with a list of all schools at the same time.  When you ask, you should provide (a) your grade profile overall and in the major, usually on a resume that includes significant academic achievements and extra-curricular activities, and (b) your LSAT score. Most letters of recommendation are sent directly to CAS as a generic form, and sent from there to the law schools you designate. If a cover sheet is necessary, provide it up front, and be sure to sign it. Do this by November - do not rush at the last minute and expect faculty members to write a thoughtful letter 'on the quick.'

**In January in your senior year**

In the first week of January, it might be a good idea to **phone** CAS to verify your application file is **complete** and has been sent to those schools you requested. You could contact the Admissions Office of those schools you are most interested in to verify that your file has been **received** and is **complete**.  Most schools will not (on their own initiative) notify you one way or the other and will **not** even consider your application **until** it is complete. Often the missing item is a letter of recommendation. The burden is **yours** to be sure the application is complete and ready for the admissions committee to consider.

**During March of your senior year**

Admissions committees will let you know as soon as a decision is made. Some will do so early (sometimes in January or February) if they use rolling admissions for those who clearly above a school's minimum threshold for admission based on a composite LSAT and GPA score.  Other programs start their admissions consideration process in February or early March. Marginal applicants usually have to wait -- often until May, June or even July, and during that time they may receive a 'wait-list' notification or no communication from the law school at all.  If you are offered admission to a law school, you will be given a deadline for accepting and submitting a matriculation **deposit** to hold your spot. If you are put on a wait-list at a school you prefer to the one that has already admitted you and asked for a deposit, then putting the deposit down is an insurance policy - a wait-list school may admit you in August, weeks before you re scheduled to start classes at the other school.

**The role of the prelaw adviser**

The prelaw adviser at Pitt-Johnstown provides a number of services, mostly in the area of counseling. He counsels all undergraduates on a walk-in basis during the academic year, juniors preparing to register for the LSAT and considering LSAT preparation courses, and seniors selecting law schools to which they will apply. All students registering for the LSAT will be asked on their registration form if they wish their LSAT score sent to their Pitt-Johnstown prelaw Adviser as well, and many say 'yes', and a few (perhaps fearing the embarrassment of a possible low LSAT score or simply not wanting anyone to know they are applying) say 'no'.

There are two types of critical advising the prelaw adviser can provide involve:

* 1. how a student can adjust his/her **undergraduate course selection** to build skills that will serve him/her well either in the LSAT itself or in first-year law school. This would ordinarily include emphasizing courses of analytical reading and extensive writing, considering extra-mural (off-campus) academic experiences, especially study abroad, and being extremely academically conscientious - not just 'getting by' with grades that are 'good enough.'
	2. which law schools **fit** the student's competitiveness profile, or even their social comfort level. Regardless of one's 'life-long dream' of attending one law school or another, law schools have a competitiveness threshold they adhere to fairly strictly. While competitiveness has lessened a bit in the past five years, it varies from school to school and students will be advised to consider each school carefully in terms of competitiveness, location, social fit, and sheer cost. In many cases, the prelaw Adviser is not a student's academic or major adviser and students should seek him out. A final caution - the prelaw adviser is**simply an adviser** - he does not have all the answers and cannot do the homework for you. He can show you where to look and advise you what to consider. But the basic choices rest with you.

Finally, any good prelaw adviser has an obligation to be **candid** with students, not merely along the lines of how competitive or noncompetitive they may be, but also and perhaps more importantly giving close scrutiny to a student's motivation in wanting to attend law school. Even among the most generally competitive (top) students, **law school is not for everyone**. It is a three-year vocational training that is, as many graduates would admit, a grind and rarely exciting or philosophical. All students, and especially those who have aspired to law school admission for years, should also consider other options - not as a fallback but as an actual career direction.

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