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***GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING TO LAW SCHOOL  
FOR FALL 2012 ADMISSION***

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This handout continues my discussion of general issues concerning law school and a legal career that is contained in the handout entitled PRELAW ADVISEMENT INFORMATION FOR FRESHMEN, SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS. You should read that document before reading this one. Also, you should access the many links on my prelaw website for the most recently updated material.

**WHAT TO DO IN SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER OF 2011:**

1. Obtain the 2011–2012 LSAC Information Guide online at [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org). Applicants must register online at [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org) for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC).

a. You may have already taken the LSAT on June 6, 2011. If not, I recommend that it be taken on October 1, 2011 or, at the latest, on December 3, 2011. The February 2012 testing date is too late. The June date is preferable because the test taker receives the LSAT score before the Fall semester begins, giving him/her the crucial information that is needed to intelligently apply early to appropriate law schools. However, if you did not have sufficient time to prepare for the June sitting, take the LSAT in the fall. If you are applying to law schools with February or March 2012 deadlines, do not plan to take the LSAT for the first time in December or February because you are likely to be disadvantaged by your late application date. Even if you receive your LSAT score by early January (assuming that you take the LSAT in December) and submit your law school application by the cut-off date, a majority of law schools follow a “rolling admission” policy (see paragraph 20 below) and, therefore, many applicants may have been admitted before your application is even received, putting you in a less than advantageous position.

b. When you register for the LSAT, please check that your LSAT score will be forwarded to NYU

(Stern). This is extremely important. I will use this information to advise you, as well as Stern students who will apply to law school in the future. All data will remain anonymous.

c. In order to register with LSAC, you must request that the NYU registrar's office provide your transcript to LSAC. You can perform part of this process online ([www.nyu.edu/registrar](http://www.nyu.edu/registrar)). The registrar's office telephone number is 212-998-4280. You should have your N.Y.U. transcript forwarded to the LSAC after your Spring and Summer 2011 grades have been recorded. (Such requests are ordinarily made in late summer or early fall.) In order to make a law school aware of your Fall 2011 grades, in January 2012 you should request that the Registrar's Office send your updated transcript to the LSAC.

d. If you are from an economically disadvantaged background, you may qualify for a fee waiver for both the LSAT and LSAC. Fee waiver forms are now available online at <http://www.lsac.org/jd/PDFs/USFeeWaiverInstructions.pdf>. You should complete and submit the form to Law Services as well as any law school to which you apply, together with supporting documentation (such as federal and state income tax forms and/or undergraduate financial aid transcript). You should submit this request well in advance of the application and test registration deadlines. Please refer to the instructions contained in the Information Book.

2. Prepare for the LSAT. I take no position on the effectiveness of commercial preparation courses, nor do I endorse one program over another. These courses are expensive and there is no accurate data which assesses their benefit. However, some applicants believe that such courses provide them with the confidence and discipline needed to study. You should determine how much outside assistance you need based on your previous experience with standardized tests and with the practice LSAT as a guide. Many Stern students have successfully prepared for the LSAT by purchasing exam preparation books and by using old exams. The LSAT Logic Games Bible is a useful book. It is available on amazon.com. LSAT preparation books are sold at most bookstores. You can order bound copies of official previous exams, as well as individual past exams from LSAC. "The Official LSAT Super Prep" contains a guide to logical reasoning questions, three sample LSAT exams and explanations for all of the items. It is available online at [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org). LSAC also offers a web-based LSAT familiarization tool, similar to the Test Prep with Explanations. Many students find that commercial study guides are also helpful. You can find handouts describing the LSAT, as well as copies of several recently published articles on LSAT test-taking techniques that may be useful for you on my pre-law website: <insert updated prelaw website here and professor's website>. Finally, the Pre Law Society in the College of Arts & Science gives mock LSATs; dates are posted on the CAS Prelaw website: <http://prelaw.cas.nyu.edu/page/home>. (See paragraph 11 for more information)

3. You should not approach the LSAT with the strategy of taking it more than once, unless there was some unusual situation that occurred at your first exam sitting that negatively affected your score, such as failure of needed air conditioning or lighting at your exam site, a severe family problem, illness etc. Otherwise, by taking the exam a second time, you risk receiving a lower score. Most re-takers do not raise their scores significantly and most law schools average the two scores, although recently more law schools are taking the higher test score. (I stress that law schools' policies vary.) Should you cancel your score? You have 6 calendar days after the test in which to make this important decision. I don't recommend that you cancel your score based on your perception of the difficulty level of the exam. Every exam is normed and the scoring is adjusted to reflect slight differences between exams. The LSAC also reports cancellations. Most schools won't question a cancellation on your record, but may question multiple ones. Also, remember that you cannot take

the LSAT more than three times in any two-year period, and that a cancellation counts against this three-test limit if you take the test and cancel your score after you have taken it. Additionally, [under the new LSAC policy](#), all exceptions to the policy will be determined by LSAC. Law Schools will not approve requests for additional testing after June 24, 2011,

4. Begin to think about the law schools to which you might realistically apply. (Obviously, the fall's semester's grades and your LSAT score will greatly impact on your ultimate choices.) Be honest and reasonable in your self-evaluation. Choose a few schools for which there is a slight chance of admission, and a few to which you are assured acceptance. The majority of your applications should be directed to schools whose admission criteria most reflect your qualifications and specific interests. A helpful reference is The Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools (especially the class profile grids) which can be accessed at [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org). Also, on my website you can obtain class profile grids that have been prepared by the Boston College Career Office. Finally, I have prepared graphs showing the pattern of acceptances and rejections made by the law schools to which Stern students and alumni have applied over the past four years. These graphs are contained in looseleaf binders which you can be review in Danielle Purcell's or my office. Based on your GPA and LSAT score, you will be able to obtain an even better idea of the likelihood of your acceptance to these law schools taking into account that every application year differs depending on that year's applicant pool.

5. Read as much information as possible about the law schools that you are considering. Check the resources including law school catalogues that some law schools will send to you upon request. Better yet, surf the internet: <http://www.yahoo.com/law/> will provide you with an abundance of law informational links, including homepages for most law schools. Another excellent site for general information is <http://www.ilrg.com>. The Law School Admissions Council's home page, which provides an abundance of information about the law school application process and the LSAT, is at <http://www.lsac.org>. Other sites that may be of interest to you include the following: Association of American Law Schools: <http://www.aals.org>; American Association of Law Libraries: <http://www.aallnet.org>; ABA Approved Law Schools: <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/approvedlawschools/approved.html>; National Association of Law Placement: <http://www.nalp.org>; American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar: <http://www.abanet.org/legaled>; Northeast Association of Prelaw Advisors (NAPLA): <http://www.napla.org>. The American Bar Association's book entitled "The Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools" includes statistical information on ABA approved law schools (such as enrollment, LSAT scores, curricula, faculty, career placement, etc.). You can research this database by going to: <http://officialguide.lsac.org/>.

6. Minority students, "more mature" students and those with disabilities (physical or mental) should further research the environments of the law schools to which they are considering. See page 9 with respect to minority student applicants.

7. If possible, visit at least some of the law schools you are considering. Take the formal tour given by their admissions offices and talk to as many students, faculty and administrators as possible. You should pose questions about the qualifications/strengths of the faculty, faculty student ratio, the library and other physical facilities, curricula, special programs and academic activities, student

organizations, career services and employment. You should listen to current students' conversations, check out the bulletin boards and student meetings areas. You should also try to determine the accessibility of the faculty—where are faculty offices located? You should realize that typically “better” and/or more popular professors' classes are featured to prospective students.

8. Law School catalogues, application packets, and financial aid information can be picked up at the Law School Forum (see paragraph 9 below). Obviously, as stated previously, you can also obtain much of this information by using the internet.

9. In the fall of each year, the LSAC sponsors a Law School Forum in New York City, as well as in other selected cities throughout the country. This fall the New York Forum will be held at the Hilton New York Hotel located at 1335 Ave of the Americas, on Friday, October 14 (Noon – 5pm) and Saturday, October 15 (10am–4pm). Call (215) 968-1001 or click on <http://www.lsac.org/jd/choose/law-school-recruitment-forums.asp> for more information. Representatives from over 160 of the nation's law schools answer your questions and bring catalogues, bulletins and applications, and the LSAC provides shopping bags so that you can collect and carry home virtually everything you ever wanted to know about legal education, specific law schools and their admissions criteria. This is an opportunity to speak directly to representatives from the admissions offices—an opportunity that you should not miss.

10. Join the Stern Business and Law Association. The Association arranges for recruitment visits during the fall semester by admissions officers of law schools from around the country, including NYU's School of Law and other law schools in the metropolitan New York area. At these meetings you may ask for an estimate of your chances of admission to their programs, but the principal object of such meetings is to gather first-hand information about schools to which you are considering. The Association presents forums throughout the academic year. Attorneys from the private and public sector speak and answer students' questions, generally during the spring semester. Visit SBLA's website at [www.stern.nyu.edu/~sbla](http://www.stern.nyu.edu/~sbla) or e-mail at [sbla@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:sbla@stern.nyu.edu).

11. Be aware of the existence of the NYU Pre Law Society at the College of Arts and Science. (See paragraph 4 above.) It is a very active and worthwhile organization (<http://www.nyu.edu/clubs/prelaw.society/>). The best way to get in contact with the society is via email: [ik594@nyu.edu](mailto:ik594@nyu.edu).

You can learn more about CAS pre-law events by subscribing to: [join-prelawsociety@forums.nyu.edu](mailto:join-prelawsociety@forums.nyu.edu). To subscribe, send the following message from your NYU e-mail address: Join prelaw first name last name.

12. Every fall the Admissions Office of NYU School of Law hosts information sessions where an admissions officer and a current law student discuss application procedures, the curriculum, placement opportunities, financial aid, student life and answer your questions. A tour of the law school immediately follows the session. These sessions generally are held on Fridays from 12:30 pm to 1:00 pm starting in late September and ending in early December. You may also observe a first-year class before the information session. Please check for details with the Law School's Admissions Office (212) 998-6060 in September or check their website for updates: [www.law.nyu.edu](http://www.law.nyu.edu).

13. I suggest that you approach appropriate faculty members to provide letters of recommendations on your behalf. It is best to talk to these professors as soon as possible; before their memories of you begin to fade and/or before they leave NYU. (See paragraph 5, 18 and 19 below).

14. You may make an appointment with me. As stated on page 1, my office is located in KMC 10-83, 44 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street. My e-mail address is [jcaldero@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:jcaldero@stern.nyu.edu). Please contact me via e-mail. During the fall 2011 term I will teach two sections of Law, Business and Society, as well as one section of Professional Responsibility and Leadership in the undergraduate program. In the spring 2012 term I will teach two sections of Law, Business and Society and one Inquiry section of Business and its Publics in the undergraduate program. I also will teach the Business Law for Managers course in the MBA program. I am an attorney, having practiced with major law firms in New York, Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles. I also have taught law school courses at several law schools. I graduated from the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

During the fall, my office hours will be held on Mondays from 12:30 – 1:30pm and on Wednesdays from 12:30 – 2:30pm. Please request a meeting by e-mailing me. You are required to complete a PreLaw Student Information Sheet, blank copies of which are available online ([Get](#) from Professor), before you make an appointment with me. The information provided on this Information Sheet will remain confidential. While not necessary, a draft of your personal statement (see Appendix A, below), as well as a brief resume, will enhance the effectiveness of these sessions. I may suggest law schools to which applications would be appropriate (though I strongly recommend that—before you meet with me—you’ve carried out your research and have a strong sense as to which law schools you will apply). I also will comment upon the suitability of the draft of your personal statement, although I will neither edit nor rewrite it for you.

As the prelaw adviser, I can assist you in deciding whether to apply to law school and suggest choices of law schools. Any senior or Stern alumni who wishes to discuss the personal statement required as part of the law school application, or who seeks advice on any other matter relating to attending law school, should make an appointment to meet in my office or speak with me by telephone during the months of September, October, November, and December of the senior year.

Please remember that I do not prepare law school applications, nor do I assist in the nuts and bolts requirements of the LSAT/LSAC registration materials. It is expected that seniors and graduates making applications to law school have the capacity to read instructions and to follow the directions contained in law school application materials and in the Information Book provided by the LSAC.

15. On Monday, September 19, 2011 at 12:30pm in Room UC-15, I will be holding a session to introduce myself, provide applicants with the information that is contained in these Guidelines and answer questions about the application process. (On Monday, October 3, 2011 at 12:30pm, UC-15, I will be holding an information session to introduce myself to freshmen, sophomores and juniors.) These sessions will be taped and subsequently posted online for those students who will be unable to attend.

16. Meet with law school recruiters who visit the NYU campus during the Fall term. (See paragraphs

10 and 11 above). During these sessions you may ask them for an estimate of your chances of admission to their program, but the principal object of such meetings is to gather first-hand information about schools to which you are considering applying.

17. Begin to prepare the personal statement which must accompany most law school applications (my suggestion on content appears in Appendix A.)

18. Line up faculty members to provide letters of recommendation and evaluations. In soliciting such letters, remember that most law schools display a strong preference for (or require) faculty letters over those from employers or family friends. If possible, one letter should be from a professor or instructor in your major field of study, or from a faculty member who has read a substantial amount of your written work and who knows you well enough to comment upon your weaknesses and strengths. When requesting a recommendation, discuss your goals for the proposed letter. You should supply the recommender with copies of your resume, personal statement, and any other insightful information. Two letters (in addition to the “Dean’s Letter” or “Dean’s Certification” discussed below) are sufficient, although a third letter from a long-term employer is acceptable (for applicants who are Stern alumni and not current students). Although most law schools now require recommendations be submitted online, if you apply to a school that does not request an online recommendation, the faculty member should photocopy the original, sign each copy, and attach it to the form you printed from your LSAC.org account, sealing it in the envelope you provided. As a matter of courtesy, you should provide a stamped, addressed envelope for each letter requested.

Please note that you can request that letters of recommendation be sent to LSAC through their Letter of Recommendation (LOR) service, and some schools will require that you use the LOR service. Visit <http://www.lsac.org/JD/Apply/services-required-by-LS.asp> for a list of law schools LOR preferences. The process is fairly similar to the one outlined above, although there are a few differences. You will need to print out and provide a letter of recommendation form that you print out from your LSAC.org account to each recommender. After LSAC receives the forms and recommendations from your recommenders, LSAC will include copies of their letters with your Master Law School Report sent to law schools to which you apply. (See the LSAT/LSAC Registration and Information Book or visit <http://www.lsac.org/jd/Apply/cas-lor-evaluations.asp> for complete rules and instructions.)

19. In addition to the letter of recommendation, some law schools may accept, recommend, or even require applicants to provide an evaluation from a faculty member or employer. Beginning with the 2011 application cycle, LSAC has provided an evaluation service for applicants that utilizes evaluations for admissions purposes.

An evaluation is composed of an online form listing six categories of skills and attributes deemed to be important in the law school admission process. The evaluator is required to rate the applicant on 30 different skills and attributes and also may provide comments about each category. The process will be completed online. Candidates will furnish LSAC with the names of those persons completing an evaluation; LSAC will contact the evaluator with a link to the website; and the evaluator will establish an account with LSAC in order to complete the evaluation forms and then submit them to LSAC. The evaluations are sent as part of the law school report. For access to the evaluator service, please see [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org).

20. Interfolio, Inc. (Paper Processing Center, 1900 L Street NW, Suite #603, Washington, DC 20036; tel. no.: 1-877-77-FOLIO, website: <http://www.interfolio.com/>, email: [help@interfolio.com](mailto:help@interfolio.com)) offers (for a fee) a service that enables students to request and store letters of recommendations. This service is especially convenient if you know a potential faculty recommender will be leaving the university before you have obtained law school applications or have made decisions about where exactly you will apply. It is also useful for those who are planning to “take time off” after graduation before applying to law schools and are nervous that their professors will no longer be at Stern or will not remember them when they get ready to apply.

21. Generally, the earlier the submission of the application, the greater your chances for admission. Almost all law schools have adopted “rolling admission” procedures, which means that applications are considered as received. The most competitive law schools begin to process applications by the beginning of December, and students applying to such schools should plan to have their completed applications on file with law school admissions offices by that time. Applications to most other schools should be completed and submitted no later than the week before the end of fall term break (third week of December). After submitting in your application, you should check to be sure that the application file is complete, including Letters of Recommendation, Evaluation Forms and Dean’s Certification (if an evaluation form and/or Dean’s Certification is even required..) Many law schools, including NYU Law School, require this certification form to be submitted by applicants who have been accepted for admission to the law school, but it is not required as a part of the application process.

22. Applicants taking the Fall LSAT who have LSAC online accounts will receive their LSAT scores by email approximately three weeks after taking the exam. LSAT test takers who do not have an LSAC online account will receive their scores in the mail approximately four weeks after taking the test. The intervening weeks should be used to fill in essential information on all applications. Once the LSAT score has been reported, a final selection of schools should be made based upon the LSAT/GPA profile, and then letters of recommendation should be obtained.

23. If financial assistance is necessary (and it usually is), you should refer to [www.accessgroup.org](http://www.accessgroup.org). The Access Group offers free on-line assistance to potential student borrowers. You should prepare your federal income tax returns for the previous year in early February and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as early as possible. These forms may also be obtained at the Financial Aid Office and are usually available in early January. For help on making wise decisions regarding debt, refer to <http://www.accessgroup.org/Student-Loans/learn-about-loans/index.htm>

## **FACTORS TO CONSIDER BEFORE APPLYING**

Many law schools are showing a predisposition toward more mature applicants—people who do not apply to attend law school immediately after earning their undergraduate degree. Over the past five years, only 25% of applicants to ABA-approved law schools have been college seniors. The overwhelming percentage of applicants are college alumni—most range in age from 23–25 years old. (More than 50% of recent entering classes at law schools such as NYU and Harvard have been comprised of individuals who were out of school for at least one year.) You should give this data some thought and consider an alternative to attending law school immediately after graduation. Given the increased competitiveness of the applicant pool, if you are a borderline candidate you may enhance your chances of admission by delaying your application for a year or two and gaining

additional experience in the marketplace or through graduate study. First of all, you will gain valuable experience in the marketplace or through graduate study. Secondly, you will have a chance to submit a full senior year's transcript with any honors you may have received. If you are intending to delay your application, before graduation you should nevertheless line up faculty members to provide future letters of recommendation and evaluation forms for you (see paragraphs 18 and 19 above).

These are changing times in the legal profession. A law degree, even from a more prestigious law school, does not provide a guarantee of legal employment. Since the severe economic crisis that began in late 2008, the legal sector has suffered and its future remains problematic. Also, many lawyers complain that the hours they put into their work rob them of a satisfactory private life. While it is impossible as an undergraduate to be absolutely certain of how you intend to earn a living, given the high cost of law school and possible future downside employment trends, one should be fairly committed to the calling of law before embarking on a legal education. My website <insert website> has links to recent articles about the bleak legal job market.

Given this data, think seriously about how dedicated you are to securing a legal education and practicing law. There will always be room for one or more good lawyers, particularly someone who views law as a helping, serving profession, and where the undertaking, as in medicine, is regarded as more of a calling than a business. These are the people who tend to be the most satisfied with the practice of law. If you have any doubts about just why you are going to law school or you are doing it at the last minute or on a whim, put it off for a year or two and try something else, whatever holds your interest, or, you might try to find work as a paralegal in a law firm or governmental office to better acquaint yourself with what it is lawyers actually do. Given today's marketplace and the cost of legal education, the decision to attend law school can no longer be taken lightly or undertaken just to broaden one's knowledge.

## **DEAN'S CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND APPOINTMENTS WITH DANIELLE PURCELL**

Danielle Purcell, an Academic Adviser for Stern undergraduates (Tisch 616), is also available to meet with students considering law school (regardless of class year). She can discuss making appropriate law school selections and the application cycle. Please visit [AdvisorTrac](#) to make an appointment.

### **Dean's Certification Forms**

Some law schools require that applicants complete and submit a "Dean's Certification" form either during the application process or after an applicant has been accepted. For more information about the request form and to obtain one, you should visit the Stern Pre-Law Advisement page ([http://www.stern.nyu.edu/UC/CurrentStudents/Academics/TalkwithanAdviser/CON\\_021792](http://www.stern.nyu.edu/UC/CurrentStudents/Academics/TalkwithanAdviser/CON_021792)). A Dean's Certification form is generally a verification of an applicant's academic record and a method for law schools to determine whether there have been any disciplinary actions taken against the applicant. (While academic and disciplinary infractions are not an absolute bar to law school, it is critical that applicants are up front about any problems.) A Dean's Certification does not replace the need for positive letters of recommendation that should be obtained from faculty members (see paragraphs 18 & 19 above).

If you are applying to a law school that requires a Dean's Certification, please download, print out, and complete the [certification request form](#). You must provide all materials specified in item IV of

the form. (Although it is often labeled a *Dean's Certification*, prelaw advisors typically complete such forms.) After Danielle receives the completed request form and all materials in item IV of the form (i.e., resume; completed dean's certification form; and stamped, pre-addressed, self-sealing envelope), it takes about two weeks for the certifications to be completed. If you are applying early decision and need a faster turnaround, please e-mail Danielle ([dpurcell@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:dpurcell@stern.nyu.edu)) to see if anything can be arranged.

Exception: If you have taken a course from Professor Calderon and know her well or if you have taken a course or have worked closely with one of the Stern deans, you may ask one of them to complete the Dean's Certification form for you and write on your behalf. As an alternative, you may ask one of them to write a Letter of Recommendation and/or complete an Evaluation Form for you.

## A FEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“If I take time off after graduation, what kind of job should I seek?”

This is a choice you should make to meet your needs. As I indicated above, applying to law school two or more years after graduation may in fact enhance your chance of admission. Some law school candidates find it useful to experience the atmosphere of a law firm or other legal environment to assist in their decision about pursuing a legal career. Others would prefer to work in another field and conduct informational interviews with lawyers in various specialties and settings, attend some law classes, and perhaps “shadow” a lawyer to see what a typical day is like. Remember if you go directly to law school (an expensive investment) without any exposure to the field, you run the risk of changing your mind about a legal career and being left with limited professional options and a huge debt.

As Stern graduates, you should take advantage of the business skills that you have acquired and work in your field of expertise for several years before applying to law school. It is doubtful that once you graduate law school you will be employed in the same type of position as you would have taken immediately after graduating from Stern.

“What do law school admissions committees evaluate?”

The LSAT and GPA are the key criteria for admissions. Studies have shown that these two factors are the most valid predictors of first year law performance. Other factors can distinguish among candidates of equal numerical qualifications—e.g., course of study (pass/fail grades should be at a minimum), quality of college (not based on a specific uniform formula), improvement in grades, college activities, ethnic background (under-represented groups get special attention), letters of recommendation, personal statement, and experience after graduation. Law schools differ in the weight they give these factors.

“To how many schools should I apply?”

Undergraduates usually apply to 6–10 big schools and alumni/ae to 5–7. (Obviously, you must take into account the expense of such applications.) You should check acceptance grids and choose a cross section of schools including those where chances are strong along with a few back-up or “safety” schools, which you would be willing to attend. You may also wish to apply to one or two “long shot” or “reach” schools.

“What opportunities exist for me as a minority applicant?”

The under-representation of minority groups in the legal profession has been a long-standing and serious problem in this country. For this reason, over the past twenty years law schools have actively

recruited minority applicants and have established policies to insure that qualified candidates are given the opportunity for a legal education. These affirmative-action-type policies are still in force to some degree despite the U.S. Supreme Court's relatively recent decisions that do not fully support affirmative-action programs.

If you are a minority student, it is wise to be well-informed of the opportunities available. You should make certain to identify yourself as a member of a minority group at the time you register for the LSAT and with the LSAC. This will enable interested law schools to contact you through the Candidate Referral Service. Thereafter, you might wish to contact minority student organizations at the law schools you are considering. It will be to your advantage to discuss your interests and application with members of these organizations because in some instances they will track your application and may have a part in the admissions decision. These students can also inform you of any special problems or special advantages for minority students at their particular school.

Each year, the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) helps economically and educationally disadvantaged students enter law school. This is done through a six-week summer program designed to introduce college graduates to the study of law (as well as through other programs). All participants who successfully complete the six-week program are awarded an annual stipend for each year of law school. Information on CLEO is available from CLEO's national office at 740 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005 or call (toll free) 866-886-4343 or (local) 202-828-6100, or email: [cleo@abanet.org](mailto:cleo@abanet.org). CLEO's website is <http://www.cleoscholars.com>.

After you have received your law school(s') letters of admission, don't forget to pay your seat deposit on time to guarantee a seat in the law school's first year class (even if you are still waiting to receive a positive reply from other, possibly preferred, law schools). Please note that some law schools have a policy regarding accepting admission to more than one law school. Verify each law school's admissions policy. Finally, please keep me updated throughout the application process.

The ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, via its Curriculum Committee, recently published A Survey of Law School Curricula. The report reviews curriculum revisions, added emphasis on skills and professionalism, and expanded electives, specializations and other degree granting offerings at 152 of the 200 ABA-approved schools as of 2011. The Section also assembled data from its national sample of law school graduates – from the class of 2002 – with respect to their early careers, in *After the JD Study* ([www.abanet.org/legaled](http://www.abanet.org/legaled)).

Another new resource is the Consumer Guide to Public Interest Programs at Law Schools, which is a comprehensive, user-friendly search tool that will fill the information gap regarding public interest, *pro bono* programs, and law school curriculum. (See [www.equaljusticeworks.com](http://www.equaljusticeworks.com)).

## APPENDIX A: The Personal Statement

The draft of the personal statement should be typewritten, double-spaced, and two-to-four pages. Essentially, the statement should be treated as a five-minute interview with the admissions committee. In drafting the statement, remember to treat the application as a whole. Avoid simply repeating information (courses, extracurricular activities, employment, or honors) stated elsewhere in the application unless it is of such special significance that it helps to focus upon who you are personally.

Before drafting the personal statement, you should engage in a pre-writing process of introspection and reflection, asking the following questions:

- Why am I interested in law as a career?
- Why am I applying to this particular law school?
- What abilities and traits will serve me well as a law student?
- What abilities and traits will serve me well as a lawyer?

When writing the personal statement, you should:

- Plan to write multiple drafts.
- Share those drafts with others and solicit their suggestions. Be sincere and succinct.
- Support claims with specific examples.
- Be sensitive.

Among possible topics for the personal statement, you should consider the following:

- In what ways am I distinctive?
- What people, events, or things have shaped me and how have they done so?
- Why am I interested in earning a law degree?
- Do I have particular career goals? If so, what are they?
- What skills, talents, or abilities do I have that will allow me to be an outstanding law student or lawyer?
- If I have had significant life experiences or hardships, how might these benefit the law school?
- Would it be helpful to the admissions committee to have a “context” for my undergraduate course work as my transcripts are reviewed?
- Why have I chosen to apply to this particular law school?

When writing the personal statement, you should:

- Strike a positive tone.
- Concentrate on personal experiences, traits, interests and goals.
- Use active verbs (e.g., “researched,” “managed,” etc.).
- Support statements with examples.
- Indicate why you are applying to a particular law school.
- Plan to write multiple drafts.

Above all, you should pause or halt in writing before:

- Making a judgment that the reviewer(s) may not share or which could offend.

- Expounding on theories of law and society.
- Writing a personal statement that focuses exclusively on one topic.
- Sending a single personal statement.
- Using less than 12-point type.
- Exceeding the stated page maximum.

In summary, if you cannot think of what to write about in the personal statement, the following areas might offer a “handle” with which to begin:

**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.** You might include: choice of major and what it has provided in terms of personal growth and development; comments on unusual grades or a particularly poor semester; a brief description of honors work completed or in progress; the nature and significance of an internship or independent studies program.

**EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND EMPLOYMENT.** Describe participation in activities, both on campus and off, particularly if it involves significant amounts of time and energy and involves working for the benefit of others. Such efforts provide tangible evidence of non-academic interests and may assist in evaluation of academic performance.

**PERSONAL HISTORY.** If English is not your first language or you are a foreign student or a first generation American, you might describe how that has affected your college experience, your plans for the future, etc. You can discuss a particular event that you believe had a significant effect on your personal and/or educational development.

**INTEREST IN LAW.** An application may ask you to describe why you wish to study law. Avoid giving a civics lesson or a naïve lecture on justice. Consider who and what influenced your decision, what contacts you have had with the profession, what use you plan to make of your training.

I strongly urge you to put your “best foot forward” in the personal statement. Do not set forth a page of excuses as to why your GPA and/or LSAT score is not higher. If you believe that the Admissions Committee should be made aware of the reasons for your poor academic performance, attach an addendum to your personal statement that explains the situation. Remember that the personal statement is a marketing tool—it is a substitute for a personal interview with the law school’s admission committee. In conclusion, here are a few Do’s and Dont’s to think about while drafting your personal statement:

DO...

1. Write well—make it flow.
2. Have a good first sentence.
3. Double space it and leave good margins.
4. Type it or use a word processor; make sure ink is dark.

5. Keep it within reasonable length (if length is prescribed, keep it within that length, otherwise plan on no more than two pages).
6. Put your name on each page.
7. Explain why you desire to attend this particular law school – avoid generics.
8. Be specific and accurate.
9. Be truthful.
10. Have statement support that is supported by the rest of the file.
11. Look beyond fraternity/sorority offices or athletic experience.
12. Acknowledge negatives in your files.
13. Turn negatives into positives.
14. Mention sensitive subjects in an appropriate way (not over dramatic).
15. Tell them why you've chosen law.
16. Show them who you are—this is your interview. Show your warmth and humanity.

#### DON'T...

1. Overuse a thesaurus.
2. Use clichés or quote others extensively.
3. Misspell words.
4. Use third person.
5. Title your statement.
6. Send multimedia presentations/modeling photos, etc.
7. Gush about law school or philosophize about the role of law in society.
8. Include wrong name of law school; it might end up on the wrong envelope.
9. Pat yourself on the back too much.
10. Be too cynical.
11. Come across as a victim.
12. Be too specific as to what you will do with your law degree unless your experience shows that it is a logical extension of what you've already done.
13. Focus too much on another person, even if he or she has been influential in your life.
14. Give a narrative resume, listing activities that are already in the application.

The preparation of an application may take several months. Plan ahead and spend the extra time to produce the most professional, well-written application possible.