

# Applying to Law School

A good, complete application requires proper planning! A complete application consists of five main items: your undergraduate GPA; your LSAT score; the application itself; your resume and your recommendation letters. Some applicants will also include addenda to discuss grade trends, standardized testing conditions or criminal records. To present yourself in the best light, you should begin preparations as soon as possible. The following strategies should help you get started.

Is law school right for you? Many applicants to law school know little about the profession and about trends in law school admissions. While you are completing the application process, take time to learn more about legal education and the profession. See Career Services' "Planning for Law School" and "Do you really want to be a lawyer?" handouts for more information.

## Recommended Timetable for Law School Applicants

April/May:
June: Take the LSAT. Continue research and finalize law school choices. Make a file for each law school and include deadlines, addresses, etc. Update your resume.
July/August : Receive LSAT scores. Send requests for information to law schools of interest. Begin writing your personal statement. Keep track of which reference letters you have received and send thank-you notes to the writers.
August/September: Subscribe to CAS. Have official transcripts from every school you have ever attended sent directly to CAS. Begin completing applications. Keep photocopies of all application materials and correspondence. Forward reference letters to CAS.

from CAS. Be certain to request the proper number of Reports be generated. CAS does not send your resume or personal statement to law schools! Remember that if you create an item, you must send it directly to each law school.

### Law School Resumes

Unless forbidden, you should send a resume with each law school application. This resume will generally be longer and contain more detail than a resume used in a job search. A typical senior will have one-and-one-half to two pages. Several good examples of resumes are available in Career Services. The resume should enable the reader to know everything about your community service, employment, extracurricular activities, special programs and academic honors. You should include information about where you went to high school, but you generally don't include details about high school activities. Remember to include specific information and details. For example, selection criteria for honors let the reader understand the significance of the honor. Career Services is always ready to review your resume and offer suggestions.

### Personal Statements and Addenda

Your grades and LSAT scores give the committee some idea of your academic abilities. Your resume lets them know what you've done and where you've been. The personal statement can be the most important part of the application because it lets the committee know something about you. Because most law schools do not interview applicants, a personal statement is your only chance to provide additional information to the admissions committee. Your resume in prose format is not a personal statement! Different people will give you different advice on what to include in your statement, so always consider the source of information. Before you mail your application and statement, have others read it and offer objective comments. Career Services, academic advisors, and trusted professors are good choices for critics. Spend time reflecting on your life, the events and people who have impacted you, and the important things in your life. Write a statement that lets the reader know more about you. To have a statement reviewed by Career Services call 512.863.1346 to set up an appointment.

If you had a poor semester or low LSAT scores, you may wish to discuss this in your application. Some will advise you to include that in your personal statement. You should do this only if that is the essence of the story you wish to tell the committee. However, overcoming low grades or doing poorly on the LSAT will not be the thesis of most statements. You may include an addendum with your application that discusses only the reasons for poor performance and how you overcame that hurdle. Reasons may include illness, financial problems, lack of study skills, or lack of motivation. If you wish to prove that the LSAT is not a good indicator of your future performance, you may wish to discuss your SAT/ACT scores and how those scores did not predict your success at Southwestern. Once again, Career Services is happy to review these addenda.

### Reference Letters

Reference letters may serve a crucial role when the admissions committee must decide between you and another applicant. Generally, you will need three letters. Choose evaluators who know you and can speak from a first-hand perspective of you and your abilities. At least one letter should be from a faculty member at Southwestern from whom you have taken a class. Faculty can