

PRE LAW AT UVM

PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Information and Suggestions for Freshmen, Sophomores, Transfers And Those Beginning to Think about Law School

As an undergraduate, the first step of several to getting into law school and becoming a lawyer is to formulate a plan of study with the advice and guidance of advisors. Approach the task systematically; you do not have to make any hasty decisions. Avoid being overwhelmed by the unfamiliar university curricula. Your first two years as an undergraduate give you some flexibility, and you and your friends can explore different offerings and think about various careers. As you determine in which direction you want to go with your career, you will determine whether the legal profession is for you. Again, build a superior academic record every semester since that is a prerequisite for advanced study in any field. A strong academic record provides you with opportunities for the future, whatever your ultimate career choice.

And yes, it's a good idea to start thinking about these issues now. The following are some suggestions for planning your undergraduate years:

1. Start your "homework" by reading and studying the *UVM Undergraduate Catalogue*. Learn about the required courses all students have to take to earn a degree. Read about majors which may potentially interest you and the additional courses required for those majors.
2. Once you are familiar with the UVM curriculum options, you will be able to talk knowledgeably with your academic advisor. When you have questions pertaining to pre law, make an appointment to talk to one of the department's pre law advisors.
3. The College of Arts and Sciences office (Waterman) has information about curriculum requirements, and can give general useful advice which will help you be a successful student.
4. Visit Career Services (E Building of the Living and Learning Center). Make an appointment to talk to a Career Counselor if you are struggling to decide among career options.
5. Assistance with improving your study skills and writing may be found in the Learning Cooperative within the Academic Support Program, located in the Living and Learning Center. A strong academic record and excellent writing skills are essential to law school, so you should strive as early as possible to become a top student.
6. Familiarize yourself with the resources of the Bailey Howe Library, particularly the Reference Room. Reference Librarians are trained to help students and scholars find information, including materials pertaining to careers. Librarians also have prepared bibliographies about many subjects, including the law.

Developing Your Credentials

1. Grade Point Average

You will need a high grade point average (3.5 or higher – and the higher the better) in a demanding major subject and other substantive

major ~~by~~ 0

3. Work/Internship Experience

It is often helpful to provide a personal record of accomplishments above and beyond your academic record. The law is an activist profession, and you must demonstrate

Above all, lawyers must be able to think critically and make judgments. The lawyer regularly is confronted with problems; he or she must be a problem solver. Sound advice to clients is the way a lawyer builds a reputation. Many of the course options listed above – Political Science, English, History, Sociology, etc. – help to sharpen your critical thinking ability. Courses in the Philosophy Department in logic and ethics are also relevant.

2. Foster Relationships With Your Professors

Upon applying to law school (or any other post graduate education), you will need strong, personalized letters of recommendations from at least two of your undergraduate professors. While brown nosing of your professors is a transparent and (frankly) annoying approach, you need to develop relationships with the faculty, if for no other reason than you need to have someone who can write an informed letter about you, one which shows that the writer knows you personally, is familiar with your work, and can comment with authority about what you are capable of accomplishing. A letter that looks like a fill in the blank exercise (*“Student A took my class last year, and did very well. Student A seems smart, and will probably do well in law school.”*) does you no good. But a letter that talks glowingly about a particular project you researched, or a paper you wrote that answered a question in an interesting way, and that also talks about how the recommender discussed your work with you and saw how your work evolved ... a letter like that is pure gold.

And of course, if you develop those relationships with the faculty, if you have those intelligent conversations with your professors, you will probably have your intellectual curiosity stimulated. That in turn means that you may start examining different topics in different ways ... which will contribute to your growth as a student, a scholar, and a person.

Finally, sitting in the back of a large lecture hall will get you no purchase here. Taking smaller classes, being engaged in class discussions, and performing well in the class will help.

Conclusions

Since you will not have enough spaces in your program to take many of the courses mentioned above, it is very important that you take adequate time to determining

e i n g