



Pre-Law Advisory Program

Shepherd
UNIVERSITY

Housed in the Department of Political Science, Global Studies, and Geography, the Pre-Law Advisory Program at Shepherd University serves students of all majors. The primary purpose of the program is to provide students interested in law school with useful information and helpful answers to common questions. It does not offer coursework leading to a degree. Students who wish to pursue a law-related course of study can choose a political science major with a legal studies concentration.

This brochure is intended as a general guide for students looking to prepare themselves for law school. It offers practical tips and future-focused suggestions that students should consider as they try to decide on a major or minor, make their course selections, and think through the prospect of applying to law school.

While a law degree is one of the most prestigious and versatile professional degrees, it is not necessarily a ticket to wealth and happiness as often portrayed in film and fiction. The key to long-term professional and financial contentment is working in a career that matches your talents, strengths, skills, interests, and abilities. Therefore, the first step toward success in law school and fulfillment in a legal career is to make sure that you have sound and solid reasons for pursuing a career in law. Your initial enthusiasm may get you into law school but will not produce the fortitude and resilience that will carry you through the rigors of legal education and the stresses of the legal profession, unless you have a firm basis for choosing that career path.

Though you may not know for sure if you made the right choice until you actually start law school, there are certain

things that you can do as an undergraduate to increase your confidence in your decision to attend law degree. Here are some points to ponder and put into action:

1. Take one or more law courses to test your desire and commitment to study and practice law. Legal courses will help you solidify your career plans and gauge your potential for future success in law as a field of study and a line of work. You are also encouraged to talk to current law school students, recent law school graduates, and practicing attorneys about their experience.
2. Once you have set your mind on law school, you will need to start preparing yourself academically and intellectually as early as possible in your college career. Indicate your interest in law school to your faculty advisor who can help you make informed decisions to prepare for law school.
3. While no specific set of academic credentials is required for law school admission, many law schools recommend that undergraduate preparation for law school should include at least one constitutional law course, a basic economics course, a critical writing course, and a course emphasizing logic (e.g., philosophy or quantitative analysis). For students interested in property, corporate, or commercial law, a business law course and a basic accounting course are strongly recommended.
4. You are also encouraged to select challenging electives that will help you develop the key skills needed for law school, which include analytical thinking, logical reasoning, critical reading, good writing, and effective speaking. Be sure to take some linguistic-

ly demanding courses that entail heavy reading and writing to sharpen your ability to express complex ideas and arguments in a lucid and cogent manner.

5. Develop a disciplined work ethic and keep your grade point average high from the first semester to establish a consistent record of academic excellence. There is nothing you can do to raise your GPA after graduation. A GPA below 3.0 will considerably lower your chances of getting into law school.
6. Engage in extracurricular activities, join student organizations, get involved in community service, and participate in internships and other work-based learning opportunities to balance your education. Law schools look at well-rounded applicants more favorably.
7. Maintain a cordial professional relationship with all faculty members, especially professors in your major field of study. The importance of strong recommendation letters from advisors and former professors in gaining entrance into law school cannot be overstated.
8. Most law school websites offer general information about the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), but it is best to learn about the LSAT from the test developer, which is the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). Plan to take the LSAT ahead of time in case something goes wrong before the last exam. Study hard to master the logical concepts and testing techniques of the LSAT. If possible, take a “prep course” to increase your chances of getting a high score. The LSAT score is the single most important factor in admission to most law schools.
9. Familiarize yourself with the law schools that interest you and, if possible, visit them. Consider the cost and location of each law school, as well as the specializations or concentrations it offers, depending on what and where you want to practice. The LSAC website (www.lsac.org) contains a wealth of information about ABA-approved schools.
10. Remember that going to law school is almost as much an economic decision as it is a strategic career decision. It is a smart investment in your future but a very expensive endeavor. As such, it is best to figure out if it is a good fit for you before embarking on this costly and strenuous journey.

About Shepherd University

Located in historic Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Shepherd University is a state-supported university established in 1871 which has a strong liberal arts emphasis in the curriculum.

Shepherd offers its 3,159 students more than 70 programs of study, including master’s and bachelor’s degree programs. Educational opportunities outside of the classroom, such as internships, cooperative education assignments, and student teaching positions, are also available at Shepherd.

The University’s close proximity to the Washington-Baltimore area allows students, through Shepherd University’s Washington Gateway Program and internships, to combine educational opportunities with cultural and social resources. For those interested in history, Shepherd is located near Harpers Ferry National Park and Antietam National Battlefield.

There are more than 60 organizations on campus including the student government association, campus radio station and newspaper, musical and theater groups, sororities, fraternities, and professional and honorary organizations.

Shepherd offers 13 NCAA Division II sports including football, men’s basketball, women’s basketball, baseball, men’s cross country, women’s cross country, softball, women’s volleyball, men’s soccer, women’s soccer, men’s tennis, women’s tennis, women’s golf, and men’s golf.

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