

Top 3 Myths Your High School Clients Believe About Law School

By Laura Hosid, JD, IECA Associate (MD)



When I start working with new clients and we get to the “what do you want to be when you grow up” question, I’ve found that high school students often have misconceptions about both law school and about being a lawyer. Although no one needs to make a decision about a career or graduate school plans as a high school junior, it is helpful to educate

students about their options. The top three beliefs I find myself challenging when the subject of law school or legal careers comes up follow.

Myth 1: I have to go to a “prestigious” college and major in political science to have a chance at attending a top-tier law school.

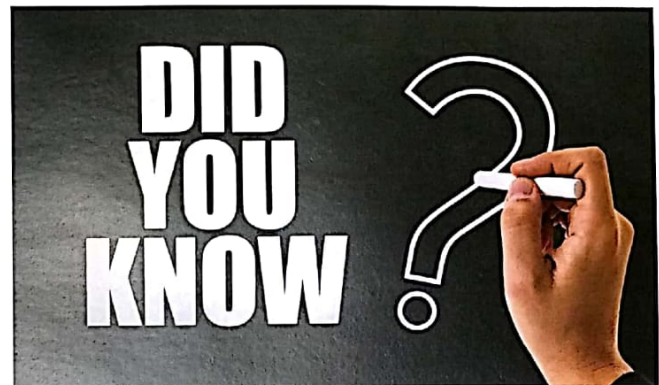
For law school admissions, the two most important factors by far are a student’s GPA and LSAT scores. Yes, law schools look at a student’s undergraduate institution, teacher recommendations, activities, essays, and other considerations. But the process is less holistic than many undergraduate applications, and a 3.2 GPA isn’t likely to get you into UPenn Law School, even if the GPA is from

Advertisement

**NORTHERN LATITUDES
SPRING TOUR**
April 26 - 28
Burlington, VT and
Lake Placid, NY

Mansfield Hall
Rock Point School
Northwood School
North Country School

For more information, please visit:
[www.northcountryschool.org/admissions/
upcoming-admissions-events](http://www.northcountryschool.org/admissions/upcoming-admissions-events)



Yale. A student is often better off with a 3.9 from a lower-ranked university. Of course, schools do also consider a student’s major—a 3.2 in a physics major isn’t the same as a 3.2 in communications. (Written as a proud communications major!)

Harvard Law School (HLS) publishes a list on its website every year that details all the undergraduate schools represented in its incoming class. The 1L JD class at HLS in 2017–2018 included students from 182 undergraduate institutions, including the usual Ivy League schools, a small Christian University in Tennessee that I’ve never heard of, and large universities in China. The list also includes public universities from nearly every state, both state flagships and lesser-known locations. Showing that list to students often helps them understand that with law school admissions (and often with careers, but that is a separate article!), what you do in college can be more important than where you go.

Law schools are looking for students who are critical thinkers and motivated to study law. Are there lots of law students interested in politics and policy who majored in political science? Sure. But there are also law students with science or engineering backgrounds who want to practice intellectual property law. Or students with finance degrees who are interested in corporate or bankruptcy law. And plenty of students who majored in something interesting to them; learned how to write, research, and think critically; and now want to explore different possibilities in law school.

One additional related myth to clear up: a “pre-law” major—or even a “pre-law” track—is completely unnecessary. If a student is seriously interested in law school, he or she may want to investigate a college’s pre-law advising resources and placement statistics. But it isn’t like medical school. For law school purposes a student can study and major in anything they’d like, and law schools do not require applicants to study anything law related or have any legal experience before applying.

continued on page 8

Myths, from page 7

Myth 2: I hate public speaking, I don't want to deal with criminals, I don't want to work a million hours in a big law firm, so being a lawyer isn't for me.

Unless students have parents who are lawyers, most of what they know about being a lawyer often comes from television and movies. But *Law and Order* only represents a small subset of the practice areas available with a law degree. Yes, there are obviously lawyers who stand up in front of a crowded courtroom and give passionate closing arguments to the judge and jury about their client's innocence. Some lawyers prosecute and defend violent offenders, and some lawyers sleep in their offices on Wall Street. But many lawyers never see the inside of a courtroom and live balanced lives. They may be structuring corporate deals, negotiating divorce or child custody agreements, drafting legislation for Congress, reviewing documents for an upcoming trial on false advertising, or running their small-town firm out of the back of a bowling alley (anyone ever watch the tv series *Ed?*). And plenty of people with law degrees don't even practice law (myself included!). Although I certainly don't push people in the direction of law school, I do want to make sure they aren't ruling it out for the wrong reasons.

Myth 3: I'll never do well on the LSAT because of those tricky logic games, so I can't get into a "good" law school.

Good news! The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) is no longer required at a number of law schools, including top-tier institutions, such as Harvard, Columbia, and Northwestern. Recently several law schools have announced policies accepting the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) in place of an LSAT score. It remains to be seen what impact this will have on admissions, but law schools are hopeful that this will make the process more accessible.

In addition, some law schools may offer programs similar to Georgetown's Early Assurance Program, through which juniors at Georgetown University can apply for early admission to the Law Center without taking the LSAT first (ABA rules now require all students to submit standardized test scores; however, Georgetown Law will not consider them in the admissions process under this program).

We are finally beginning to see some flexibility around standardized testing in the law school admissions world, and there's reason to believe that more law schools are going to jump on the LSAT-optional bandwagon. By the time current high schoolers are ready to apply to law school, there is potential for the landscape to change dramatically.

Law school is definitely not for everyone, but as IECs working with high school students, I think our role is to educate them about all options and help them integrate their potential career and graduate school paths into their college search. ^A

Laura Hosid, Vinik Educational Placement Services, can be reached at laura@vinikeps.com.



DISCOVER THE POWER OF ALL-GIRLS AT SEM

Among the oldest girls' schools in New York State, SEM has been dedicated to creating a culture of achievement, scholarship, leadership and service tailored for girls since 1851. Call 716-885-6780 or email admission@buffaloseminary.org to find out about 5- and 7-day residential opportunities on our cozy, historic campus.

NO INTERNATIONAL FEES



SEM
BUFFALO SEMINARY
EST. 1851



Independent day and boarding school for college-bound girls

205 Bidwell Parkway, Buffalo, NY 14222

BUFFALOSEMINARY.ORG