



Five Steps to Law School

Step 4: Researching Institutions

Time: Any time prior to August of the year in which you will apply

Refer to Exercise 4.1 *Law School Qualities* when completing this section.

What to read

1. Law School web sites.
2. Law School view books & catalogs (order by May or get them at the fall Forum).
3. Guides (ABA/LSAC *Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools*):
<http://officialguide.lzac.org/docs/cgi-bin/home.asp>.

Visit schools nearby (there are 6 in Chicago) and any school to which you may apply

1. Attend tours (usually held weekly, check with law school admissions).
2. Attend law school Open Houses (usually held in summer, fall & early winter).
3. Attend classes – especially at our own law school.
4. Meet current law students and ask them what law school is like.

Pre-law events

1. Law School admissions officer visits (autumn & spring quarters).
2. **Taking the Next Step** (for 3rd yrs) <http://takingthenextstep.uchicago.edu/>.
3. Attend Pre-law events on campus (subscribe to the prelaw email list):
<https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/prelawlist>.
4. Join **Habeas Corpus**: <https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/habeas-corpus>.
5. Go to the **Law School Forum** in your second year
 - a. <http://www.lzac.org/LSAC.asp?url=lsac/law-school-recruitment-forums.asp>.

Information Management

1. Purchase a file box.
 - a. Create a file folder system for brochures, notes, etc.
2. Keep notes on each school so you don't forget.



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3. Create “lists” and update regularly (refer to exercise 4.1 *Law School Qualities*).
 - a. List 1: “Law School Qualities List”
 - a. The longer this list becomes, the easier it is to select schools.
 - b. List 2: “Law schools I’d like to attend”
 - a. This list can have as many as 30 names – you will cut later.

Pre-Application Summary: *By August 1 of the year in which you apply you should...*

1. Recognize your strengths and weaknesses as they relate to your candidacy.
2. Articulate why you want to be a lawyer beyond that it was a childhood decision.
3. Have made the personal & financial decision to apply and to matriculate in the following year.
4. Have taken the LSAT, registered for the LSDAS, and requested letters of recommendation.
5. Have created a criteria list of qualities that are important to you in a law school.
6. Have created a list of potential schools with 20-30 names.
7. Be preparing (financially and academically) to visit the some of the schools to which you will apply if you have not already done so.

Complete exercise 4.1 and then go on to Step 5



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Step 4: Researching Institutions

Exercise 4.1: Qualities in a law school

What do you want in a law school? In order to pick the law school that best fits your needs, it is necessary to determine which qualities are most important to you.

For example, ABA accreditation, location, size, diversity, and cost are all important characteristics, but what about career placement, teaching quality, faculty availability, or the level of student satisfaction?

Determining what is – and what is not – important is a uniquely personal decision, and one that can be reached only after considerable (read: weeks) research and reflection. Resources for this kind of information include:

- *ABA/LSAC Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools* :
<http://officialguide.lzac.org/docs/cgi-bin/home.asp>
 - *Viewing all schools in a single geographic region is one way to begin.*
- Law school web sites and admissions publications
 - *What do law schools say about themselves and about their strengths?*
- The law schools themselves: There is no better way to get an impression than to visit.
 - *There are 6 law schools in Chicago – take advantage of your location and visit all of them! Even if you do not apply in the Chicago area at all, having visited multiple schools helps you determine which criteria are most important to you.*
- Students (especially UC alumni) currently attending schools of interest
 - *Are they happy? Employed? The admissions office can provide names.*
- Alumni of the College who are practicing lawyers
 - *Search for them in the alumni careers network database:*
https://alumniservices.uchicago.edu/Careers/network_main.asp

Notice what is not on this resource list: rankings, indexes, lsat/gpa grids/calculators or similar quantitative tools that are useful, but *not at this time*. In fact, try to ignore numbers (for now) because the goal here is to identify the qualities you seek in an institution.

The more you read about law schools and are able to visit, and the more you talk to current students and alumni, the easier it becomes to identify those qualities or characteristics that are most appealing to you. Set a goal of identifying 10-15 criteria (excluding rank and perceived reputation *for now*) and write them down on the back of this sheet in pencil. Update this list regularly (hence, the pencil) and arrange it in rank order. These criteria will eventually be the

