The Application Process

There is no magical number of schools to apply to. In general, we recommend that you apply to ~6 schools -- two that are a reach for you, two that are safe schools, and two that are within your range. Of course, your circumstances may dictate that you apply to more (or, rarely, fewer) schools. Applying to law school is expensive. Apply to enough schools to give yourself good options, but not so many that you’re wasting your time and money. According to LSAC statistics, Carolina grads submitted 7.27 applications, on average, for Fall 2021.

There are many factors to consider in deciding where to apply. Among other factors, you should consider:

- **Location** - Is there a region of the country you want to live in? Is it important to you if the law school is part of, or separate from, the main campus of a university? Is it significant if you are in a city or a more rural area? Cost of living in that city needs to be considered as well.
- **Size** - Do you prefer a small school where you get to know all the students and faculty but may have fewer course offerings or do you prefer a large school with more course options?
- **Reputation** - Some law schools have strong national reputations, while others are more regional.
- **Nature of the student body** - Will your classmates challenge you? Will they be supportive? Are they competitive? Connections made in law school can have life-long effects - these individuals will be your peers and may be helpful to you in your future career.
- **Strength of the faculty** - Each law school typically has a faculty directory where you can view each law professor’s bio and area of expertise.
- **Employment Data and Bar Passage Statistics** - What are the employment outcomes upon graduation? Where do graduates work and what is the average starting salary for graduates? What percentage of students pass the bar exam? Law School Transparency [1] is a helpful website that allows you to view this information from the National Association for Law Placement (NALP). Check to see if the law school you are interested in has a Career Development office as well.
- **Costs** - Law school is very expensive. Generally public schools are less expensive (if you are an in-state student) than private schools. Many schools
have scholarship opportunities. Financial aid (from the law school, the government, and commercial banks) is also available. Some schools have loan repayment assistance programs. Make sure to get financial aid information early in the process of selecting schools to apply to.

- **Career goals** - Do you want to be obtain a career in academia, practice in a big-name firm, work for a national public interest group? If so, it is recommended that you go to a top law school. If you have more modest goals, you can choose from a wide variety of schools.

- **Joint degrees** - Do you want to earn another degree at the same time as your law school degree? If so, research which schools offer a joint degree program in the area you are interested in. If the school you wish to attend offers both degrees you are interested in, but not in an official joint degree program, contact the school early to determine what possibilities there are for combining the programs.

- **Opportunities for clinical work** - Some law schools have a stronger clinical program than others. If you know you want to do clinical work while in law school, determine which schools have clinics you might be interested in.

- **Opportunities to attend school at night/part-time** - Do you want to go to law school while working full-time, part-time, or staying with family members during the day? If so, find out which schools offer night/part-time programs.

- **Opportunities to start law school other than in the fall** - Do you want to start law school in the spring or summer instead of the fall? A few schools offer this option.

- **Opportunities for externships** - Some schools have an established externship program, while others do not. If you are interested is doing an externship, find out which schools have such programs.

- **Diversity of the student body** - Law schools will typically have a class profile on their website that includes information about the diversity of the student body.

- **Importance of public interest law** - Some schools offer several public interest courses, have strong public interest placement records, and offer loan repayment assistance programs to graduates who do public interest. If you think you might want to work in public interest, determine which schools are more supportive of this option.

- **Specialization** - We do not recommend that you attend a law school because it has a wonderful program in a particular field of law, such as international law or environmental law. Many people go to law school intending to become one type of lawyer and end up specializing in something else. We instead recommend that you attend the best school possible and take courses in your area of interest.

- **Rankings** - As you probably know, there are many rankings of law schools. Each ranking system has its own methodology and criteria, which is why different schools place differently in different rankings. In order to understand a ranking system, you should learn what methodology and criteria have been used. Rankings may be a useful place to start learning about a law school, but you should not decide to apply to a law school based solely on its ranking in any
There are many sources of information about law schools. You should start with *The Official Guide to Law Schools* [3], published annually by the LSAC in collaboration with the American Bar Association. Within the Official Guide to Law Schools website, you are able to view ABA-approved law schools by state or region, in addition to searching law schools based on your UGPA and LSAT score.

Another useful website is the [American Bar Association Statistics][4] webpage, which includes various law school data, including information about each school’s entering class.

At the beginning of November, University Career Services assists in organizing the Law School Fair. At the fair, representatives from more than 50 law schools around the US are available to speak with you about their law schools and answer any questions you have. As the fair approaches, information will be distributed via the pre-law advising listserv [5] and on our [UCS events webpage][6].

LSAC sponsors Law School Forums throughout the country. To find out more information about attending these forums, please visit [https://www.lsac.org/lawschoolforums][7].

Early in the application process, you must decide if you want to apply to a school via early decision. The deadline for applying early decision is usually by early or mid-November, although it varies from law school to law school, be sure to check with each law school’s admission website to determine if they offer early decision if you are interested. The advantage to applying early decision is that if you are admitted, you no longer have to deal with the stress of applying to law schools and typically the early applicant pool is smaller than the general pool. On the other hand, you must submit your application earlier and if admitted, the decision may be binding (you must commit to attending that law school), and you may have little leverage in negotiating for a higher merit-based scholarship.

Even if you are not applying early decision, we recommend that you submit your applications in as early as possible, *usually within the fall semester by the end of December*. Most law schools use a rolling admissions process and the sooner your application is in, the better chance you have to be admitted.