

So You Want To Be A Lawyer?

SEPTEMBER 2021

Prepared by
Women Lawyers Association of Michigan (WLAM)
Inaugural Leadership Class

2020-2021

About WLAM



FOUNDED IN 1919

The Women Lawyers Association of Michigan (WLAM) was founded by 5 women attorneys on March 24, 1919, before women won the right to vote. Its initial mission was “to advance the interest of women members of the legal profession and to promote a fraternal spirit among lawyers.” In its early days, WLAM was primarily what we would call in modern parlance, "a social professional networking group." Primary activities when the group was first founded consisted of monthly meetings, which usually took place in one of the members' homes. Emphasis was put on strengthening professional ties between women lawyers, mentoring younger inexperienced attorneys, and sharing knowledge, information, and experience. Eventually the format was expanded to include speakers on notable and educational topics and programming involving advancing women in the legal profession and community service. Two of the earlier programs/projects were concerned with support for the WWII effort and a year long discussion/research project on the topic of labor restrictions against women.

Since as early as 1926, WLAM has been active in supporting the advancement of women lawyers through seeking their appointment and election to public and professional positions.

WLAM Leadership Class



The goal of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan (WLAM) Leadership Class is to provide each student with the tools to develop leadership and professional skills necessary for success in law, business, government, the non-profit sector, and the judiciary. The WLAM Leadership Class greatly enhances each student's business contacts, equips each student with the tools necessary for professional development, and provides unique leadership opportunities to hone their newly learned skills.

The Inaugural WLAM Leadership Class was tasked with creating a service project. We decided to create a comprehensive toolkit that will help women navigate the complexities inherent in the path to a successful legal career, no matter what stage of interest they are at.

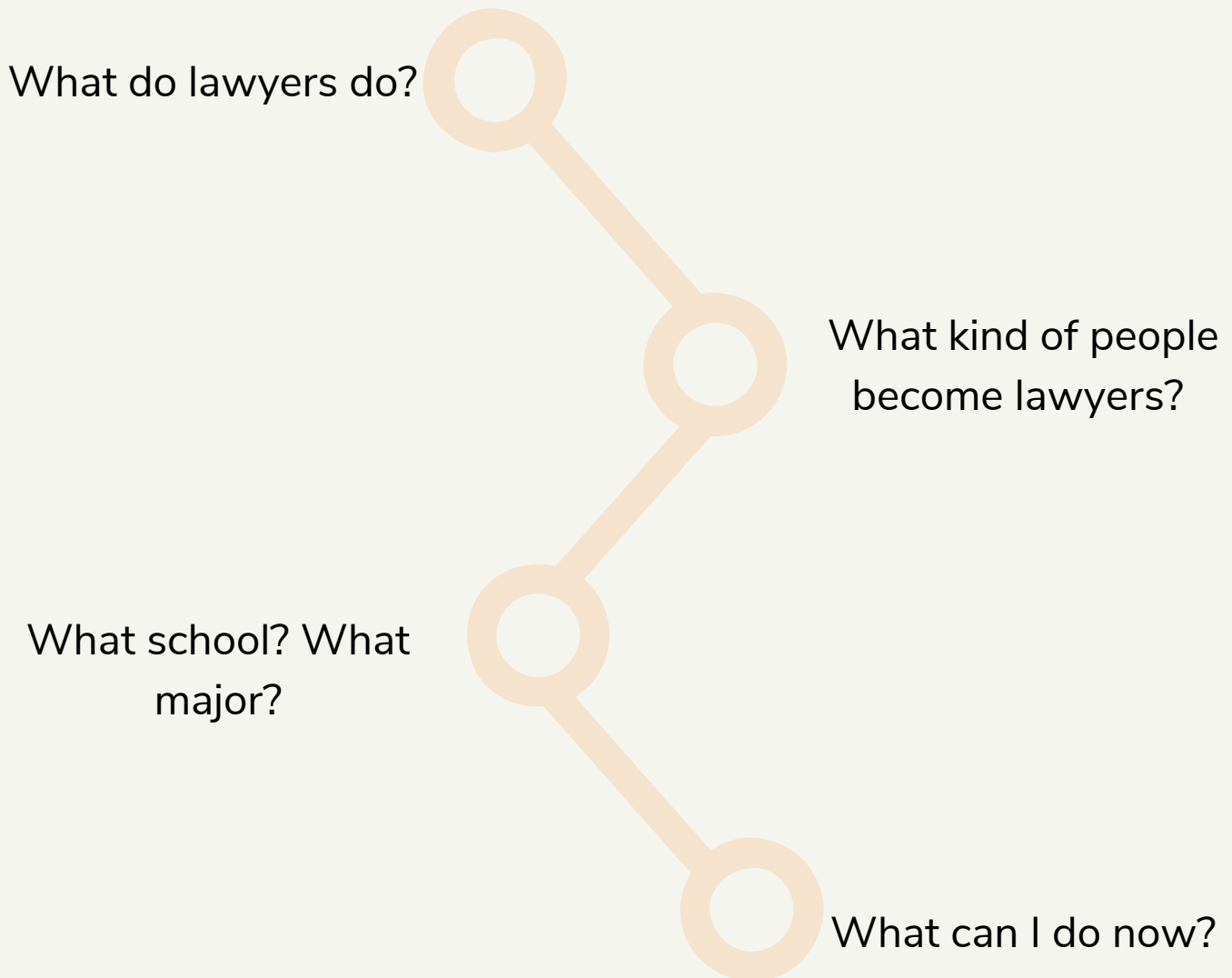
This toolkit will explore different resources available to aspiring attorneys at the high school, undergraduate and law school level. The resources vary from tips and factors to consider when deciding if law is right for you, to information about post-graduate clerkships.

Highschool Resources



Highschool Resources

As a high school student, there are things you can begin to do now on your journey to becoming an outstanding attorney. This toolkit will help you start thinking about what it really means to be an attorney.



What do lawyers do?

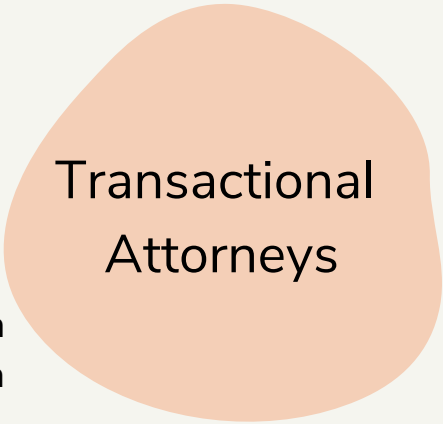
The lawyer answer to this question is... it depends. There are many different kinds of lawyers, and they all do different things as part of their day-to-day. There are transactional attorneys, litigators, judges, general counsels, partners, associates, and the list goes on. Then, within these categories, there are various practice areas or industries lawyers practice in. There are attorneys who practice in the arena of business law and attorneys who focus in sports. Almost every industry needs and appreciates the role of a lawyer. For the sake of time, we will focus on two particular kinds here: transactional attorneys and litigators.



Litigators

Litigators are the attorneys you most likely see on TV shows and movies. These are the attorneys who go to the court room and argue. There are criminal litigators, those who argue criminal cases, and civil litigators, those who handle everything else. These attorneys need to be especially detail-oriented, have excellent research skills, be convincing, and always be ready to roll with the punches.

Transactional attorneys handle deals ranging from real estate to athlete contracts. This type of attorney's work is done primarily in office and is appealing to someone who may not see themselves arguing in front of a judge. They negotiate deals, draft contracts, and are ultimately tasked with representing and advocating for their clients through written documents. These attorneys need to have an expert understanding of their industry, strong negotiation skills and great interpersonal skills.



Transactional Attorneys

What kinds of people become lawyers?

There is no one personality trait that leads one person to the legal field over another. Everyone makes the choice for a different reason. As you just learned, there are many different kinds of lawyers and each requires different skills. Transactional attorneys may require good interpersonal skills but that should not discourage the introverts reading this. The strongest personality trait of a lawyer is being hardworking. Whether it is researching a complex legal issue or thinking creatively for a business client, hard work is required. The next trait is a willingness to learn. No one is born an expert. The legal field requires learning from others. Lastly, a good lawyer knows they don't know everything, so humility.




Hardworking

Humility

Willing to
Learn

What undergraduate school? What major?

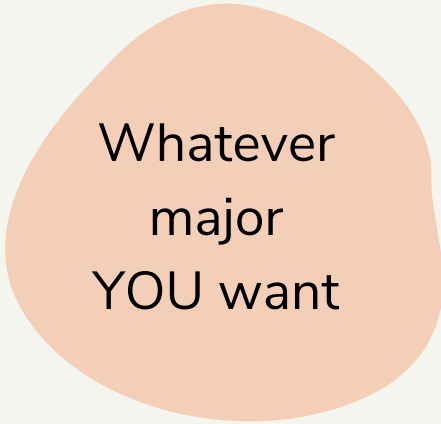
The best thing to do as you begin your legal career is go to an undergraduate school you genuinely want to go to and select a major you have real interest in. Many people select a school simply for their liberal arts program, and then major in English or Political Science, but that is so far from necessary. No need to limit yourself! That is, unless you plan on going into Intellectual Property or Patent Law. More on that later...



Whatever
school
YOU want

When selecting a school, there are many things to consider. Academics! What do you want to major in? Does your school offer your major and opportunities for hands on learning? Culture! Do you want to attend a school with an outstanding sports team? What about extracurricular activities? Greek Life? These are all things to consider.

When selecting a major, the best advice is find something you are interested in. If you love theatre, go for it! If math is your thing, go for it! If psychology interest and excites you, go all in! Your major is just another piece of your story in your law school application. You should be able to explain why you selected it and what your experience was like relatively easily. This is also an opportunity to dive into the area of law you want to practice. If you want to be a sports attorney, maybe sports management is a good major for you.



Whatever
major
YOU want

What can I do now?

As a high school student, being a lawyer seems so far away. You may select a different career or end up finding out you want to be a completely different kind of lawyer. Life happens! However, there are tangible things you can do now in high school such as shadowing an attorney you know. If you don't know any attorneys, reach out to your teachers and school administrators. Also, search what courts are near you and maybe shadow a judge or clerk. Look into Mock Trial experiences, through your high school or local bar association to get a deeper understanding of how lawyers build and argue cases. There are a wealth of opportunities to get involved in the legal field early - including scholarships and fellowships. Lastly, be willing to learn. You never know who can teach you something new or expose you to a path you hadn't considered before. You may think you know exactly what you want to do, but it never hurts to remain open to new opportunities.




Shadow

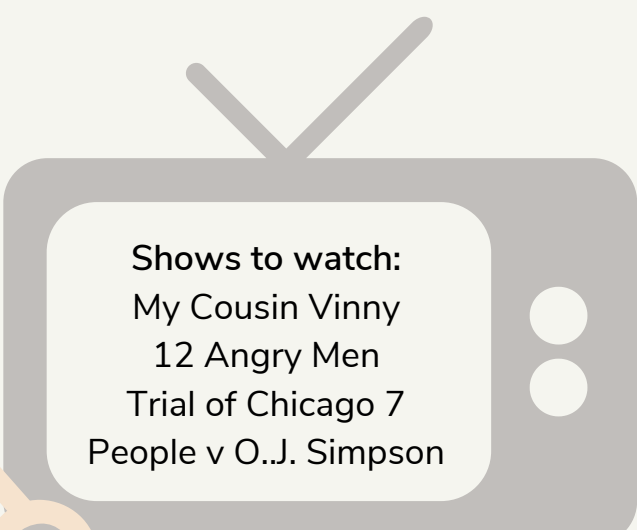
Scholarships
and
Fellowships

Willing to
Learn

Highschool Resources



Shows to watch:
How to Get Away with Murder
Criminal Minds
Suits
Law School on Netflix
Legally Blonde



Shows to watch:
My Cousin Vinny
12 Angry Men
Trial of Chicago 7
People v O.J. Simpson



Summer Immersion Programs:
[ALA Girls State](#)
[Georgetown University Law Academy](#)
[Yale Young Global Scholars: Politics, Law, & Economics](#)



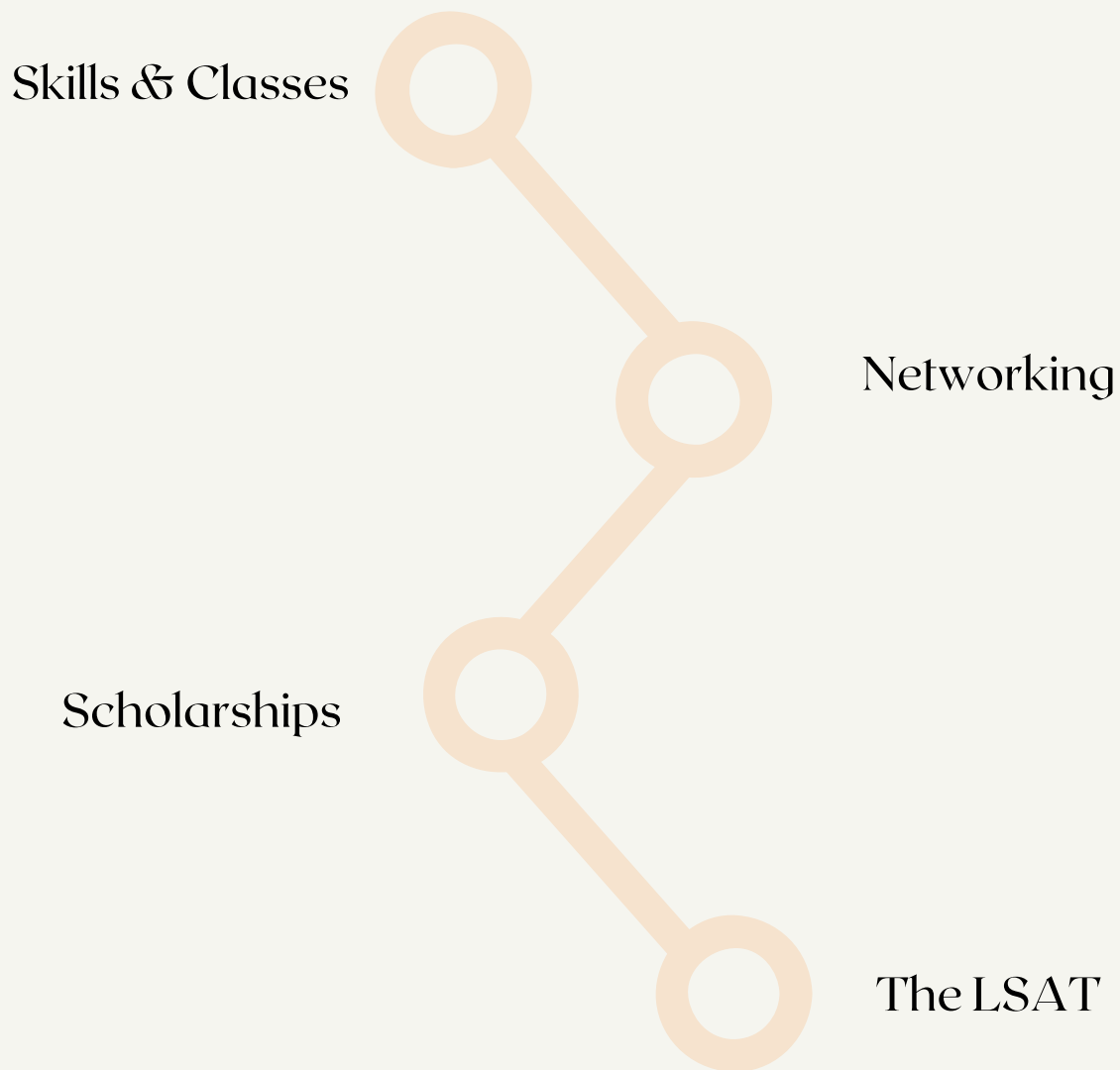
Summer Immersion Programs:
[Explo: Trial Law + American Justice System](#)
[NSLC Law Advocacy](#)
[DOI Internship Program](#)
[California Innocence Project](#)
[FBI Jobs](#)

Undergrad Resources



Undergrad Resources

If you're an undergraduate student considering law school, this toolkit is for you! The next couple pages will discuss important information to prepare you for law school, such as skills to build, suggested classes, and tips for taking (and passing) the LSAT.



Skills to build

If you are an undergraduate student contemplating law school, there are certain skills you can start to build now that will go a long way to helping you in law school. Those skills are:

- Critical Thinking
- Research
- Analytical Thinking
- Purposeful Reading
- Persuasive Speaking
- Public Speaking
- Time Management
- Interviewing
- Self-Confidence
- Negotiation

Now that you have a list of skill to build, what classes will help you get there? The following is a non-exhaustive list of classes suggested by current law students:

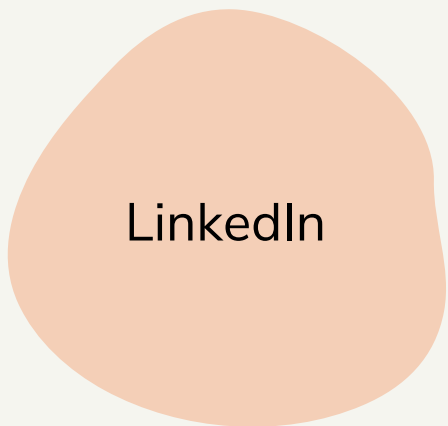
- Cultural Anthropology
- Introduction to Psychology
- Introduction to Sociology
- Journalism
- Political Science
- Criminal Justice
- Advanced English/Writing Courses
- Business Courses if interested in business/corporate law

Suggested Classes

Keep in mind that there are no classes you are *required* to take to get into law school - people from *all* majors can go on to Law School. *The only exception is for Intellectual Property law, which requires you to have a STEM/hard science degree to sit for the bar.*

Networking

Networking during undergrad is just as critical as networking in law school. Connect with other pre-law students at your school. These are the people that are going to be your classmates and eventually colleagues. Sure, while connecting with lawyers and/or judges may be beneficial, it also may not be the easiest to do at the undergraduate level.



LinkedIn is a great resource to reach out to people whose careers inspire you and who work at companies you are interested in. You should make a LinkedIn Profile and complete as many profile sections as possible to stand out with employers and people you are trying to network with. Once you build out your profile, you can start reaching out to people you want to talk to!

LinkedIn Message Template

Hi _! My name is _ and I'm currently a/an _ year undergraduate student at _ . I've been considering pursuing law and was wondering if you have 15-20 minutes over the phone or Zoom to answer some questions I have about what that decision might mean.

Note: Feel free to be a little more casual on here. Think of it as you sliding into their DMs...respectfully. You don't want to go overboard for obvious integrity reasons, but keep in mind that you're also trying to build a friendship that isn't too formal.

Email is another great way to reach out to people whose careers inspire you. Oftentimes, attorney's email addresses will be available on their firm website, so you can use it and reach out to spark a conversation.

Email Template

Dear __,

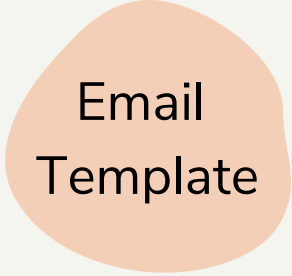
My name is __ and I am currently a/an __ year undergraduate student at __. I've been considering pursuing law after my undergraduate studies and was particularly interested in your practice area. I would greatly appreciate it if you had about 15-20 minutes over the phone or Zoom to talk about how you got started and answer some of my burning questions about the field. Thank you in advance and I hope to hear from you soon.

Name

Class level, Graduation year

University

Cell Number | Email



Email
Template

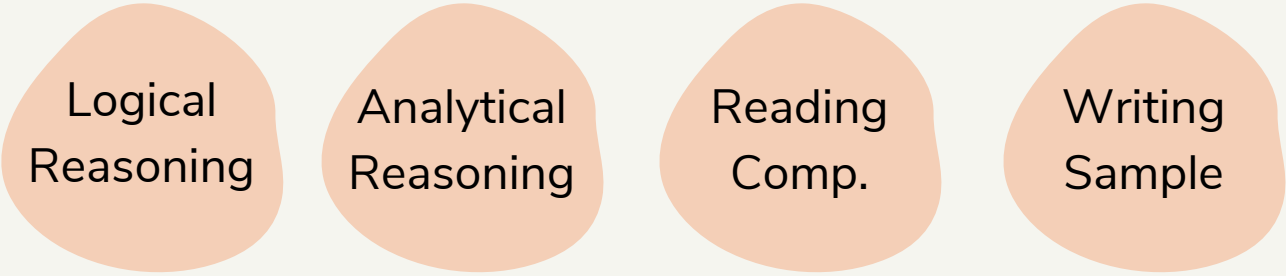
Note: This needs to be professional. Address a specific person. Most firms have a list of attorneys and their contact information on their website. Don't email multiple people at the same firm. Target only one. If you find an administrative assistant or office manager's email, perhaps reach out to them instead. Especially at smaller firms, this makes it more likely your request will be passed on to all of the attorneys and not just one.

Tips if you decide to forgo the templates:

- Be as concise as possible. Lawyers are used to summaries and overviews. If your message is too long, you might just get left on read.
- Overall, it's always better to reach out to an attorney whose practice area you're interested in rather than just contacting anyone. It helps them know exactly what you're looking to get out of time spent with them, and gives you a higher chance of a response.
- It's important to put in the specific amount of time you're asking for. Attorneys don't have a lot of time to spare, so saying you would like to talk for 15-20 minutes makes them more willing to connect with you.
- Always include a phone or video option if you want face-to-face connection. A phone call or online meeting is easier to schedule than an in-person time, but if they offer an in-person option, take it!

The LSAT

The LSAT can be very daunting. Fear not! Though it can certainly be stressful, attacking your LSAT prep should be an exciting milestone on your journey as a future attorney. A great starting point is the Law School Admission Council's (LSAC) website. They are the company that administer the LSAT. This is the best place to find test components, procedures and dates, and registration deadlines.



Logical Reasoning

Analytical Reasoning

Reading Comp.

Writing Sample

The LSAT is broken into four sections: Logical Reasoning, Analytical Reasoning (famously known as Logic Games), Reading Comprehension, and a writing sample. This type of standardized test can seem very different from the ACT or SAT you may remember from high school. Be prepared to spend a significant amount of time learning how to approach these types of questions as well as allowing time to hone your test-taking strategy. To find out your strengths as well as any areas with opportunities for improvement, you may want to take a practice test cold-turkey.

A pre-law advisor may have insight into free proctored practice tests in your area. In addition, Khan Academy is a great starting point for LSAT prep. It offers free access to prep questions and answer analytics. 7Sage also has a good amount of high-quality content that can be accessed for free in addition to their paid subscriptions to lesson plans and answer explanation videos. Like law school, LSAT prep is a marathon--not a sprint. It takes time to understand the different types of questions, learn how to solve problems, and adjust to processing all of this new information under time pressure.

How Do I Pick a Law School?



Location

Unless you're shooting for a top 14 law school (T14), try your best to choose a local law school in the state you wish to practice in after graduation. This increases your chances of connecting with attorneys and people who can help you get to the jobs and positions you want. Additionally, your future colleagues are more likely to be classmates you went to law school with. That in and of itself is beneficial once you're out working as an attorney. Also, if you want to practice in a certain state, make sure you review their bar requirements so that you know you are eligible to even take the bar exam. Law is not always geographically flexible, so do your research!



Clinics

Clinics are a critical part of your last year in law school, and sometimes earlier depending on your school's program offerings. This is where, under the supervision of a licensed and practicing attorney, you spend a semester doing actual legal work on real cases with real clients. Treated as a capstone course, this is where all the skills and concepts you've learned about in your first two years are put to practice. If you already know what practice area you want to work in post-graduation, look for law schools that offer clinics specializing in that practice area. If you are unsure, look for law schools that have a variety of different clinics in different practice areas. This way, you are more likely to get curated legal work experience once you do come to a decision.

How Do I Pick a Law School?



Alumni Network

A law school's alumni network is very important, especially if you intend to work in the same city/state as the law school you intend. How many of the law school's students remain in state after graduation? How many work at the law firms you may be interested in or hold job positions you eventually want to attain? These are questions you should be asking yourself when deciding on a law school. Ultimately, the stronger the alumni network of a particular law school, the more access you have to law school advice, local law firm insight, and valuable connections in general.



Cost

Law school is expensive!! The average law student graduates with around \$150,000 in student loan debt. That's a hefty number to have to pay off. It doesn't help that the starting salary for fresh law graduates is only around \$78,000 a year. If you're choosing between a T14 law school you'll have to invest a significant amount of money into and a local law school that is offering you a bigger scholarship, weigh the benefits with the financial disadvantages and understand that the law you'll be taught is the same at both schools. Although circumstances and personal goals will ultimately dictate your decision, it's worthwhile to think that your future self may thank you for making the more financially considerate choice.

Scholarships

Many law schools offer merit-based scholarships to incoming law students based on their LSAT score and GPA, among other things. What you may not know is that you can often times negotiate these scholarship amounts with your prospective school, especially if you've got multiple admissions and scholarship offers under your belt. Think of this as your first step towards becoming an attorney, and advocate for your worth!

There are also many scholarship opportunities offered by national firms and organizations. These may be good to invest the time into applying for if it is in a field you really want to go into or something you feel passionately about. But remember – the pool is large, literally open to all law students in the nation. Apply to these scholarships sparingly, save your time, efforts, and recommenders' efforts, for regional, state, and local scholarships.



Many county and state bar associations, as well as local attorney groups and associations, offer scholarships for law students. Those scholarships may not be as hefty as national scholarships, but they have a smaller applicant pool, which increases your chances of being selected. Another valuable benefit to local scholarships are the connections you gain with local attorneys and those who work in your preferred practice area.

Scholarships

Michigan Specific Scholarships:

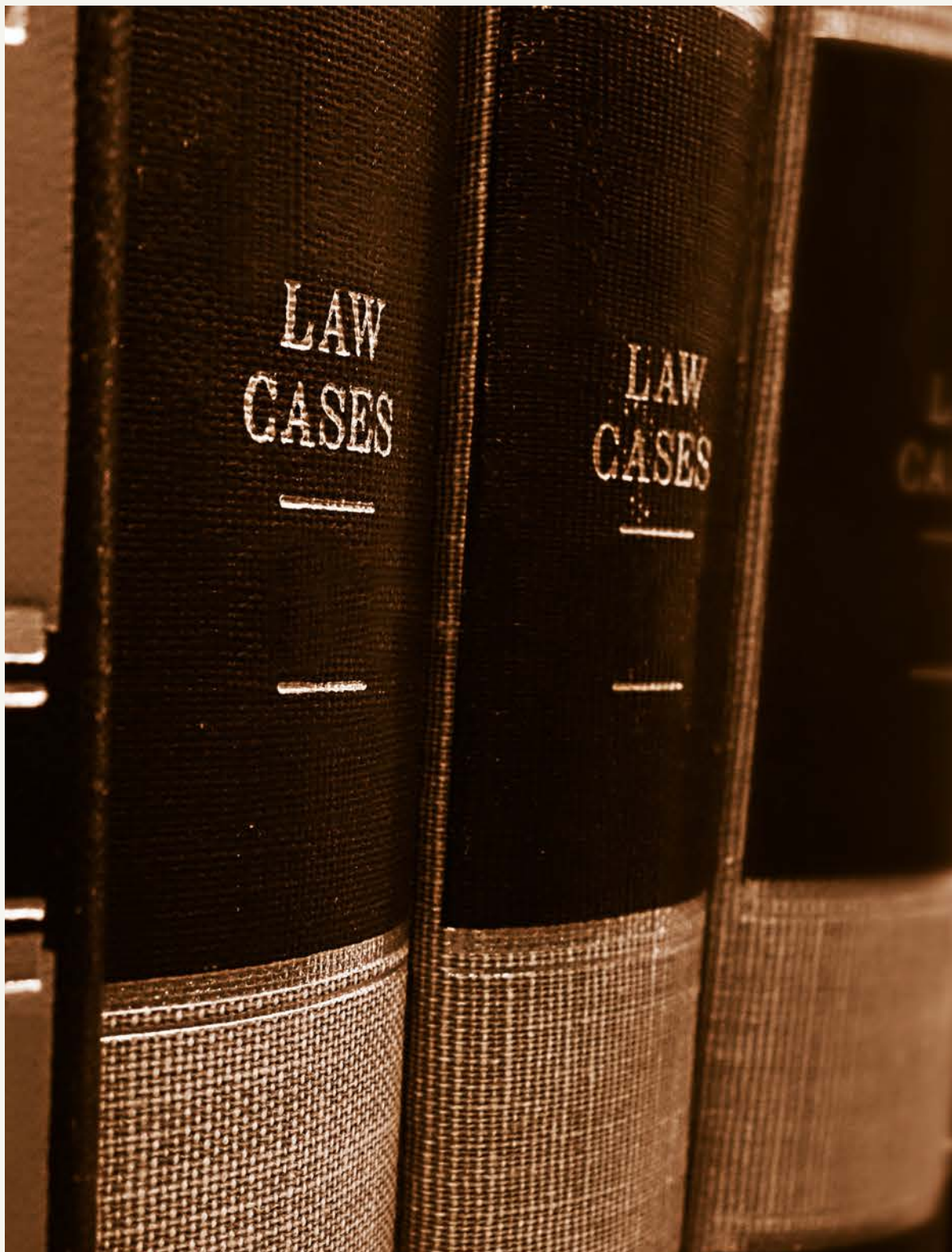
- Henry Klein and Shirley Klein Legal Scholarship
- Damon J. Keith Scholarship – Wolverine Bar Association
- Victoria A. Roberts Scholarship – Wolverine Bar Association
- John S. Beagle Scholarship*
- Judge Philip J. Glennie Law Scholarship*
- Macomb County Bar Foundation Trustees Law Scholarship* - Macomb County Bar Association
- Kimberly M. Cahill Memorial Scholarship – Macomb County Bar Association
- Philip F. Greco Memorial Scholarship* - Macomb County Bar Association
- Peggy (Kommer) Novosad Scholarship*
- John H. McKaig II Scholarship Fund* - State Bar of Michigan Children's Law Section
- State Bar Association of Michigan Insurance & Indemnity Law Section Scholarship

Michigan-Specific Scholarships for Women Law Students:

- Outstanding Women Law Student Scholarships - Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation
- Sarah Killgore Wertman Scholarship*
- Impact Scholarship* – American Business Women's Association, Greater Oakland County Chapter

*Certain residency or practice requirements apply

Law School Resources



Law School Resources



As a law student, there are a lot of unique programs and experiences that you will want to know about going in. In this section, we will cover the following:

Student Involvement

- a. Co-Curriculars
- b. Experiential Learning
- c. Student Organizations
- d. Competitions

Pro Tips

- a. Vocabulary
- b. Study Styles
- c. Law School Specific Class Style
- d. Networking

Planning for the Future

- a. Types of Law
- b. Specialized Areas of Law
- c. On-Campus Interviews (OCIs)
- d. 1L Summer Legal Experience
- e. Multi-State Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE)
- f. Bar Prep
- g. Post-Grad Clerkships

Coping with Law School

- a. Mental Health
- b. Law School After a Gap
- c. Law School as a Parent or Caregiver
- d. Law School as a First-Gen Student
- e. Being a Research Assistant or Teaching Assistant
- f. Law School and Finances

Student Involvement

Co-Curriculars

Law school offers opportunities to develop your legal skills in a controlled, faculty-led setting. These can include things like Law Review or Journal, where you can build your writing skills or get published. It can also include Moot Court, an appellate advocacy competition that involves writing and an oral argument, or Mock Trial, where you complete actual hypothetical trials. Some schools offer unique co-curriculars outside this standard list.

Experiential learning is another option to develop practical legal skills in a controlled setting. This can include taking skill based classes like trial advocacy, contract drafting, or negotiations. It can also include clinics where students draft attorney work product for real life clients under faculty supervision. Externships are also an option where students work with an organization outside the law school but can receive academic credit that counts towards graduation requirements.

Experiential Learning

Student Organizations

Student organizations at the law school level are not very different from the student organizations or clubs you've participated in during high school or undergrad. They are an opportunity to meet students with similar interests and often take a professional angle regarding specific types of law (ex. A Criminal Law Society).

Moot Court and Mock Trial as mentioned above are examples of co-curricular competitions and if you are interested in them, you can watch examples on YouTube. These competitions are intended to simulate real courtroom experiences. Local judges are often invited to oversee and critique student presentations. Many schools offer other competitions related to transactional law, negotiations, or other specialized/niche areas of law.

Competitions

Pro Tips

Vocabulary

One of the most challenging parts of starting law school may be learning the vocabulary of the legal industry. There will be times where you're in class or talking to someone and you have to google a word after, and that's okay! If you want to start learning some of the vocabulary, here are some great resources:

- [Top 47 Terms You Should Know For Law School](#)
- [30 Legal Terms to Know Before Law School](#)
- [Essential Law School Glossary for 1Ls](#)

Everybody studies differently and processes concepts differently. Learning what your study style is can be very helpful. You may learn best by writing extensive notes, drawing diagrams or flowcharts, or a variety of other methods. Here is a resource that may help you build on your study style in law school, [Law School Study Tips for Different Learning Styles](#).

Study Styles

Outlining? Socratic Method?

While researching law school, you may have seen terms like outlining, socratic method, or cold-calling mentioned. Outlining is the law school equivalent of a study guide, where we summarize all our notes from the semester down to a concise outline of material. Socratic method and cold-calling refers to how professors in law school will "pop quiz" you in class, with no warning. Many professors don't ask for raised hands, they simply say, "Jane Smith, can you explain this case to me?"

When you are a student, people are more inclined to help you. Use that to your advantage. There are hundreds of associations that you can join as a law student for free or discounted prices that provide opportunities to network, attend seminars etc.

- Women Lawyers Association of Michigan
- American Bar Association
- Bar/lawyer associations specific to counties, states, or practice areas

Networking

Planning for the Future

Types of Law

Some students enter law school with a clear picture of what area of law they want to practice when they graduate. Other students have not even started to explore what various areas of the law are out there in the legal field. A lot of students find themselves somewhere in between.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter. If you know where you want to end up, you can cater your law school course selections towards that career goal. Otherwise, law school is an opportunity to explore various areas of the law, and you don't necessarily need to have it all figured out by the time you graduate. As highlighted in the sections below. Legal employers do not expect you to be an expert in any particular area of law fresh out of law school.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of different areas of the law that you might want to investigate as part of your career exploration process.

Administrative Law	Education Law	Juvenile Law
Animal Law	Elder Law	Labor/Employment Law
Antitrust Law	Entertainment/Sports Law	Maritime Law
Appellate Law	Environmental Law	Military Law
Bankruptcy Law	Family Law	Municipal Law
Business/Corporate Law	Health Law	Patent Law
Civil Rights Law	Immigration Law,	Personal Injury Law
Compliance Law	Intellectual Property Law	Real Estate Law
Constitutional Law	Insurance Law	Securities Law
Criminal Law	International Law	Tax Law

Remember: This is non-exhaustive. There are many other areas of law, and other career opportunities out there. There are even opportunities for law school graduates who do not want to sit for the bar exam and become a licensed attorney (these are often referred to as JD Advantage careers).

The Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) has a [quiz](#) to help figure out what area of law might be right for you. Of course, talking to your law school's career services office, your professors, your law school alumni, and your fellow law classmates will help in your career exploration process.

Why do people keep asking me if I want to do transactional law or litigation? Transactional law involves researching, preparing and reviewing documents like contracts, negotiating, and advising. Transactional lawyers rarely see the inside of a courtroom. Litigators seek to resolve disputes in court, but a lot of the pre-litigation work still involves researching, preparing and reviewing documents, and negotiating potential settlements. This is not something you need to decide any time soon.

Specialized Areas of Law

What
about
my classes?

Every law school does not cover every area of law. You may be interested in a type of law not covered by your school, and there are ways to work around that. As we previously discussed, most areas of law can be divided between transactional law or litigation. When you are selecting your courses, clinics, and co-curriculars in your second and third year of law school, focus on building your knowledge or skills more broadly in transactional law or litigation if you can not take more specific classes for your interest.

Many schools have student organizations that focus on specific areas of law. These student organizations will allow you and your classmates to learn from each other and collaborate on what resources are available for your area of law. The student organization may also bring in speakers from that area of law that can help you build your network.

Student
Orgs

Research

Going into a niche area of law that your school doesn't serve can require extra work on your part because the school may not have the resources or connections to help you. Be prepared to research on your own. A lot of practice areas have ABA sections, state bar sections, or national organizations or associations. Dedicate sometime to finding out the key organizations, publications, or resources for the area you are interested in.

We've previously discussed LinkedIn, but platforms such as that become even more important when you have to build your network unassisted by your school. In the LinkedIn job feature, you can search "legal internship" and other variations, and then narrow it by industry. This will allow you to set alert for internships and jobs, but it also allows you to see the important organizations in your area of interest. You can see who works there and select a few people to reach out to!

Networking

Planning for the Future

OCIs, Grades, and “Big Law”

Before diving into this section, it is important to remember that grades are not everything. A JD is a JD and is a huge accomplishment. That being said, you will inevitably hear discussions of “OCIs” and “Big Law” during your first year of law school, and the role that grades can play in the OCI process.

OCIs are on-campus interviews that usually take place during your first summer of law school. In these interviews, law firms and some other legal employers recruit students to work for them during their second summer of law school. This is the process used by a lot of the large law firms in any given market, which are the firms people refer to as “big law.” In some cases, but not all, the big law firms will extend offers to their summer associates to return as first-year associates after graduation.

Where do grades fit into this? OCIs are a very competitive process, and unfortunately that means firms have to set some sort of criteria to screen the multitude of applicants that they receive from all over the state, and perhaps even all over the country. Some firms may require a student to have a GPA in a certain percentage of their class, such as the top 25%, to even be considered for an interview. Others may prefer applicants with previous or upcoming moot court or law review experience. Some firms do take a more holistic approach with applicants, but ultimately, they all have a way of choosing a limited number of students to interview, and then only a handful of students to hire.

OCIs can be a demoralizing process. Please know that despite OCIs being a popular topic of conversation among law school students, very few students actually obtain summer associate positions through the OCI recruitment. If you go through the OCI process and do not receive an offer, you are in good company. Most of your law school alumni and fellow classmates were or are in the exact same spot.

Check with your law school’s career services office, as well as other employment search websites, to find summer opportunities outside of OCIs. These will pop up throughout your second year of law school. Smaller firms that don’t participate in OCIs often hire summer students for paid employment. These are often considered law clerk positions instead of summer associate positions. Regardless of your title, you will still end up with practical, hands-on experience to add to your resume as a law clerk.

Planning for the Future

Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE)

At some point during law school, you will most likely have to take a course on “professional responsibility” or “legal ethics.” These courses are, of course, designed to prepare you for your legal career and keep you out of trouble. They are also designed to prepare you for the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE).

Not all states require the MPRE, but most, including Michigan, do require it. Each state sets its own criteria for what it considers to be a passing score. It is a multiple-choice exam, which currently consists of 60 questions (only 50 are graded as 10 are experimental questions) and has a two-hour time limit. The MPRE is administered three times per year – March, August, and November. You have to register for the exam approximately two months ahead of the exam date, but be sure to check out the [NBCE website](#) for up-to-date, accurate information. You can take the MPRE multiple times to achieve a passing score, but in states that require the MPRE, you have to pass before you can become a licensed attorney.

Many students like to take the MPRE after they take their professional responsibility course in their law school curriculum, so that those lessons are fresh in their mind. It is also common practice to take the MPRE for the first time during your second year or second summer of law school, so that you still have plenty of time for a retake if necessary.

Regardless of when you choose to take the MPRE, the good news is that there are plenty of resources out there to help you prepare, and a lot of them are FREE. You can find MPRE prep courses from many of the same companies that offer bar prep courses, such as Barbri, Themis, Kaplan, and JD Advising. Using the various free offerings for MPRE prep will also allow you to get a preview of what each company’s platform looks like before committing to one of them for bar prep, should you choose to purchase a bar prep course later on.

Planning for the Future

Bar Exam & Bar Prep

Your law school will teach you as much as they can before you graduate. However, it is entirely possible (and probable) that you will not graduate knowing everything you need to know to pass the bar exam on your first try. Since the bar exam is, in most jurisdictions, only administered twice per year, passing on your first try should be the goal.

The exact format of the bar exam will vary by jurisdiction. Many states have adopted the Universal Bar Exam (UBE). Michigan will be administering the UBE for the first time in July 2022. You can expect that your doctrinal courses – the courses you probably took in your first or second year, like property and contracts – will be prominently featured on the bar exam. There are also lots of bar-tested topics that you may not have elected to take in law school. Do you have to teach yourself this content? Not necessarily. That's where bar prep companies come in.

There aren't many money saving opportunities when it comes to bar prep. However, one tip is to start your research early. Some companies do offer a bit of a discount for signing up during your first or second year. There may also be discounts available for students pursuing a career in public interest, depending on the company you choose. Be sure to research different offerings by different bar prep companies and budget appropriately. Some companies do offer payment plans.

Your school may have student representatives for certain bar prep companies. Use them as a resource. They not only know the product they are trying to sell you, but they likely also have a lot of tips and tricks for your state's bar exam.

If you happen to live in a state where the bar exam is administered in one physical location for the entire state (i.e. Michigan), a good tip is to book your hotel room early to get a spot near the location of the exam. Most hotels open up their reservation systems a year in advance. This will help to eliminate some of the stress since you will be staying nearby and ready to go.

Planning for the Future

Post-Grad Clerkships

Students often confuse judicial internships with judicial clerkships. To clarify, judicial internships are, as described in the internship/externship section above, unpaid positions that you hold for a semester or a summer. Judicial clerkships are different. These are paid positions where you work as a clerk for a judge. Most judicial clerkships are term positions, usually for a year or two, following your graduation from law school. There are clerkships offered with state courts and with federal courts (yes, even the Supreme Court of the United States).

In a judicial clerkship, you are a full-time assistant to a judge. This is a fantastic way to gain access and knowledge about the judicial process. Employers are often excited to hire former judicial clerks because of their increased knowledge of the law and court system, and the relationships and connections they developed during their clerkship experience. Some “big law” firms even offer bonuses or other incentives to associates who have completed a judicial clerkship, although they also often limit this to clerkships with specific courts.

What does a judicial clerk do? The exact job description will vary by court and by judge. Some clerkships will entail more administrative tasks than others, particularly at the trial court level. As a judicial clerk, you will almost certainly gain experience in legal research, drafting memoranda and court opinions, proofreading, and source/cite checking.

In general, federal clerkships are more competitive than state court clerkships. As with any career opportunity, networking early on may help get your foot in the door. Check with your law school’s career services office for specifics on how and when to apply. Federal judicial clerkship positions are posted on [OSCAR](#) and state courts will have their own application process.

Coping with Law School

Mental Health

Book Recommendation

How to Be Sort of Happy in Law School

by Kathryn M. Young

- A law school survivor herself, Young teaches students how to approach law school on their own terms: how to tune out the drumbeat of oppressive expectations and conventional wisdom to create a new breed of law school experience altogether.

Tips

- Schedule time in your day to do something you enjoy, whether that be catching up on a tv show, reading a book, connecting with friends, or working out.
- Although law school can be demanding and draining, it is important to balance your personal life with law school.
- To avoid feeling burnt out, you'll want to incorporate activities you enjoyed before beginning law school. It is possible to balance both!
- Use your support system! Talk to friends, family, and classmates who care.
- Go to therapy!



Coping with Law School

Law School After a Gap

- Some students decide to begin law school directly after graduating from undergrad. Others decide to take a few gap years in between. It does not make a difference whether you begin right after undergrad or take gap years in between.
- From personal experience, some of us worked between undergrad and law school to save money for school. Doing this gives you ample time to prepare for the LSAT, research schools you wish to attend and prepare for your law school journey.
- One concern some students have after taking a couple years off is not having health insurance, particularly after turning 26 when they are cut off from their parents. Many schools offer health insurance for their students because they understand some students take gap years before beginning. The law school's website should have more information regarding health insurance programs for students.

Law School as a First Gen Student

- As a first-generation law student, you may often feel nervous or “in the dark” because you do not know any practicing attorneys and don't have any family members that attended law school.
- Do not feel that you are falling behind other law students that know attorneys or have friends/family in law school already. There will be so many great resources for you to reach out to and ask questions. Everyone is willing to help and answer any questions you may have. It is great to find mentors within your law school who will be a beneficial resource for you. Professors are also always willing to help answer questions. The administration can also be a valuable resource as you begin to network, alumni will also be available. Remember, you are not alone!

Coping with Law School

Law School as a Parent

- Before you embark on the law school journey, find a support group of individuals who you can rely on when emergencies come up and who can take care of your child(ren) or help you in another way.
- Do not feel guilty for taking time for family and putting it ahead of law school. It will help you mentally. Carve out the time for your family whenever you can.
- Don't compare yourself to your peers in law school. Many are completing law school with a non-traditional path, and that's okay.
- Try to keep to a rigid schedule, block out time for readings, maybe before your children wake up in the morning or after they go to bed. Maintaining a routine will afford you more time to be present with your children while ensuring your law school responsibilities are accomplished.
- Childcare - Look on your campus to see if they might have childcare on site, while you are in class. When you're running on hour 16 after sleeping 6 hours (or likely less) the night before, you're going to need it. If your kids are older, you will still need someone to help with them while you do your readings and homework. Law school requires extensive amounts of reading - you will be reading until you are cross-eyed.
- If possible, also try connecting with other law student parents - its nice to have someone understand what you're going through. The most important thing to remember - don't sacrifice family time for your grades or co-curriculars. Your earlier work experience will go much further toward your employability than stretching yourself thin and missing important time with your kids and/or partner.
- If you have a partner, make sure they on board. Law school will get crazy - crazier than undergrad - and you will need someone to be on hand, helping to keep the house clean and the kids (and you!) fed, especially during finals and the finals studying period.
- Remind yourself often that you are accomplishing so much, and be gracious to yourself as well. Your children will be so proud of you.

Coping with Law School

Co-Curriculars and Mental Health

- One of the best ways to gain experience in law school is to join co-curriculars such as law review, moot court, mock trial, or a journal.
- These opportunities are great ways to build your legal skills and to add a line to your resume that stands out, but they can also be very demanding.
- When considering joining co-curriculars, ask students that are currently involved with them what the time commitment looks like and what the expectations are for your contributions.
- Be strategic about which co-curriculars you commit to based off your own understanding of yourself and what you feel you can manage.
- Trust your gut! If everyone is saying you "have to do something," they're wrong. Do things that are right for you!

Law School and Finances

- A big concern for any law student is the cost of attending law school. Many students will have to take out loans which can be daunting, especially if they already have loans from undergrad.
- Any questions you have regarding financing are best answered through the school's financial aid office.
- The cost of textbooks can also be a big financial burden as many of them are not cheap. There are various ways that a student can get textbooks that allow you the option to purchase new/used or rent new/used.
- PRO TIP: If you can afford to buy the supplemental books or materials (study guides) that a professor recommends, then do it. Often the materials are written by the same authors of your textbook and provide further explanation to the concepts you are learning.

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This toolkit was created by the inaugural Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Leadership Class.

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