Prelaw Information for Freshmen and Sophomores

Prelaw is not a formal major at Rice. We use the expression "prelaw" as a convenient way to describe all training, studies, and experience which precede formal law study. It should not be understood as underemphasizing the importance of undergraduate work, nor as implying that such work is a mere preparation for the study of law. The success and effectiveness of your legal training depend upon the breadth and depth of your cultural and intellectual background and experience; they must not be underemphasized. Students who plan to enter law school would be wise, therefore, to take traditional and demanding academic courses.

1. What are the requirements for admission to law school?

A bachelor's degree with any courses or major. No particular courses are specified nor is there a preferred major.

2. What do law schools ask an applicant beyond the fact that they have a degree?

First, a high grade point average (GPA) and a strong score on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Beyond that they look for a program of study that was designed to develop basic skills and insights in comprehension and expression in words, the ability to think deductively, inductively, and by analogy, and creative power in thinking.

Schools also want “interesting” students who have demonstrated a passion in life that is externally focused and beyond themselves. This is done in the personal statement.

3. Which courses should I take to develop these basic skills.

No specific courses are required; however, anyone entering the legal profession should have the ability to easily communicate both verbally and in writing. Courses with a strong writing component are, therefore, recommended.

Generally, basic accounting courses are useful as well as the Economics and Philosophy of the Law courses offered at Rice. Legal courses in history, political science, or anthropology can provide a historical overview to law which is usually not given in law school.

4. As a Prelaw student, what criteria should I use in selecting a major?

The best guide is your own interest, passion, and ability. Major in a field that interests you, you enjoy, and in which you can express your passion. You will make better grades in subjects you like. That is important. Also, if you get no fun or inspiration from your studies, you are probably in the wrong field. Look beyond your major, however, to your other course selections. You should also select distribution and elective courses that contribute to your vision of your curriculum.

5. How important are extracurricular activities?

This varies from law school to law school but they are generally not a major consideration in admission to most law schools. However, reasonable participation in campus activities can help you develop valuable communication, social, and logical skills.

6. Where can I get more information and advice about prelaw studies and law schools?

The office of the Prelaw Advisor is located in the Student Advising Office in the Ley Student Center. Reference books and pamphlets are there with information about the legal profession and law schools.

The best single source of information is probably the Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools put out by Law Services. A copy is available for your use in the Prelaw Office. Other copies can be obtained in the Campus Book Store or from the LSAC.

Office of the Prelaw Advisor
Donald Ostdiek, PhD
http://www.sjp.rice.edu/prelaw/index.html
dho@rice.edu
713 348-4786