PRE-LAW INFORMATION

Note: Pre-Law is not a major that you may earn a degree in. You will need to decide on a major to obtain your degree.

THE LEGAL PROFESSION
The legal profession is one that will challenge and enliven the future professional. A lawyer is seen as someone who has good communication, written, analytical, and logical thinking skills. The legal profession helps clients who have issues ranging from tax issues to personal issues. A student who studies the law may find himself or herself working in many different capacities. Some lawyers choose to pursue careers in the corporate, government, health, or non-profit environments to name just a few. The future lawyer also might decide to use his/her degree in politics or business. There are many avenues for the future lawyer to pursue.

LEGAL EDUCATION
There are 186 American Bar Association (ABA) Law Schools in the United States, with two in the state of Nebraska: University of Nebraska College of Law and Creighton University School of Law. Law school education is comprised of three years of rigorous course work leading to a J.D. (Juris Doctorate) degree. The total number of credit hours may vary from school to school. The first year curriculum is fairly standard between all law schools. Students generally have more choices during the second and third years. Most law schools also have joint degree programs where you obtain your law degree and another graduate degree (i.e. MBA/JD). Practical experience is important so most will have clinics where you have your own caseload of clients while you are supervised by a professor.

UNDERGRADUATE PREPARATION
You will need to complete your baccalaureate degree before entering law school. Any major is acceptable. Law schools are looking for students who have a variety of majors. Common majors include political science, history, English, psychology, sociology, economics, finance, philosophy, business engineering, and foreign language. Because law is such a broad field, any major will work as preparation for the study of law. Law schools encourage students to major in the field that most interests them based on the belief that students will be more academically successful when they are pursuing a major that most interests them. Students should consider taking courses that will give them a broad-based knowledge to build their studies upon. Law school admissions committees also look at the level of difficulty of courses taken, how many courses are taken at the upper levels, and how many classes are taken Pass/No Pass. Students should avoid a series of “W”s on their transcripts.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED COURSES
There is no prescribed course work for law schools. The following UNL courses are suggested in the skill areas necessary for law school applicants:

Reading Comprehension & Writing Skills
ENGL 101, 150, 151, 254
Any 200, 300, or 400 level ENGL course

Analytical Reasoning
MATH 104, 106, 203; STAT 218
PHIL 110, 211, 221, 230 or 301

Communication Skills
COMM 211, 212, 286, 312, 325 or 371
Knowledge Skills
ANTH 110 or any 200, 300, or 400 level ANTH course
CJUS 101, 251 or any 300 or 400 level CJUS course (consult criminal justice adviser)
HIST – any course especially at 300 or 400 level
POL 100, 325, 345, 350, 441, 442, 443, 469
PSYC 181 and any 200, 300, or 400 level PSYC course
SOCI 101 and any 200, 300, or 400 level SOCI course

BEYOND ACADEMICS
Pre-Law students are encouraged to participate in experiences such as leadership roles, volunteer work, research, and shadowing, which will help prepare them for the legal profession. Activities beyond the classroom play a significant role in a student’s application to a professional school program and exploration of the profession. Such experiences demonstrate a commitment to and knowledge about the profession. In particular, shadowing legal professionals and involvement with clubs such as the Pre-Law Club or Mock Trial Club will help students to learn more about the legal profession.

APPLICATION AND ADMISSION
1. The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) ideally should be taken in June of the last school year before you hope to be admitted into law school. The test is given four times a year: June, October, December and February. Taking the LSAT in June allows a student to re-take the LSAT in October and still be on track for most law school admissions cycles. However, law schools view multiple LSAT scores differently. Registration information can be obtained from the Arts & Sciences Advising Center or from the Law School Admissions Council, www.lsac.org. The LSAT measures logical reasoning, analytical reasoning, reading comprehension, and student’s writing ability through a writing sample. There is also an experimental portion to the LSAT to assist in future test development. Students are encouraged to take practice tests as much as possible to familiarize them with the test and develop the skill areas the test is designed to measure. There are many study guides and books available to help you with this process. The Explore Center offers FREE practice LSAT’s on a monthly basis.
2. The Credential Assembly Service (CAS) is a standardized reporting service that prepares a report on you for distribution to law schools. The registration material for CAS is available through the Arts & Sciences Advising Center or at www.lsac.org. CAS will compile your LSAT score(s), undergraduate transcripts, and letters of recommendation (if you utilize the optional service) and send this information to law schools you are interested in. You will also receive a copy of this report. You should register for the CAS service sometime in the early fall of the school year prior to entering law school or at the same time you register for the LSAT. The subscription to the service is good for five years.
3. Law School Application Components: Your application to law school will include all of your undergraduate academic information, a personal essay, and your LSAT score. Most likely, the law schools you apply to will also require letters of recommendation and a resume of your work experience and extracurricular activities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Law School Admission Council, www.lsac.org

University of Nebraska College of Law
800-742-8800 or 402-472-2161
http://law.unl.edu/

Creighton University School of Law
402-280-2586
http://www.creighton.edu/law

June 2014