

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE UW-MADISON LAW SCHOOL EXPO

Planning your day: Fairs are open-house style; you can arrive at any time and leave at any time during the scheduled hours. Most people spend from several hours up to an entire afternoon at the fair. This allows time to attend live workshops as well as time to talk with law school representatives. Often the afternoon hours are less crowded. Print out a schedule ahead of time—also found on the website—so that you can plan your day around your particular interests. Print a list of participating schools and, if available, a floor plan of the fair showing you the location of each school's table.

Tips for Planning Ahead

- Make a list of schools you want to visit or pick up information from.
- Create a set of questions you have not yet found answers for.
- Plan to visit with schools outside your geographic region as well as those in your neighborhood.
- Do your research. Use the LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools (available at LSAC.org) to learn more about schools that interest you.
- If possible, determine what your own requirements are for choosing a law school (for example, any geographical limitation), so that you can choose wisely whom to talk to and how to manage your forum time efficiently.

Who will be at the fair?

The representative could be an admission dean, a faculty member, a recent graduate of the law school, or even a current student.

Talking to Reps: The Most Important Piece

Please note: representatives will not speculate on your personal chances of admission, although you can inquire generally about the qualifications and profiles of their admitted students. (This information can be found on the LSAC website and, ideally, should be part of your pre-fair research. This kind of preplanning will help you narrow your search, since it is difficult to talk to representatives from every single law school.) The representatives are not there to take your resumés, writing samples, or any other documents. However, they can and will talk to you about their school's programs, facilities, student body, and any other questions you may have that will help you to decide whether to apply. Representatives will be wearing identifying name tags, and you may ask for a business card. If you think you may be interested, be sure the representative has your contact information so the school can send you updated information.

Tips for the Day of the Expo

Scan the fair map/school list and circle the numbers for the schools you have already decided to visit. This will help you keep track of where you have or haven't yet gone. Fairs can be crowded, and you would do well to remain flexible about the order in which you visit the tables. If a particular table—or even aisle—looks very busy, you can detour to another area, and your forum map will help you find your way back to visit your “don't miss” schools.

If You Are Applying for Enrollment next Fall...

While you may focus on your prepared list of schools, this is a great opportunity to pick up information about other schools. Keep an open mind. Plan on coming away with ideas about schools you may apply to that you have not previously considered. Take home as much material as you can to review later. Be sure to pick up the materials for the schools to which you definitely wish to apply so you have the most current information about applications, deadlines, visiting dates, and so forth.

If You Are Applying for Enrollment Beyond next Fall...

Come prepared to take home a lot of information. You should try to pick up as much information as possible and talk with as many law school representatives as possible. You will have plenty of time to review the information at home, and you may find the perfect school for you that you didn't even know existed. At a minimum, get a fact sheet and the website address for each school. You can get a head start in preparing for attending a forum next year and some ideas for creating a list of questions for schools you want to visit.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR ADMISSIONS REPS:

Focus on ways to interpret the data you collect beforehand. Distinguish yourself by NOT asking about their average LSAT and GPA—this information should be readily available in their literature!

- How does your law school review applications?
- Is there an advantage in applying early? If so, by when?
- When does it start getting to be too late to submit applications? Will you take results from the February LSAT?
- Does your school have "early action" or "early decision"?
- When do you typically let applicants know about admissions decisions?
- How do you evaluate multiple LSAT scores?
- How important is it for students to have a law-related internship or job before law school?
- How many transfer students have been accepted in recent years? What criteria are used?
- What percentage of the students worked between college and law school?
- Does your school offer a conditional summer program for applicants whose GPA/LSAT credentials are below the norm? If so, what admission criteria are used? What % typically are admitted?

CONSIDER ASKING ABOUT:

CURRICULUM--Find out all you can about the curriculum, particularly beyond the first year.

- How is the first-year program organized?
- What clinical opportunities are offered at your school? Is participation competitive or open to all?
- Do you offer a part-time option? Can first year students start other than in the fall?
- Do you offer law school study abroad programs?
- What joint degree programs are offered?
- How are students selected for law journals or law review? What % participate?
- What is your faculty-student ratio? How would you describe faculty-student relationships?
- How are students chosen for law reviews/moot court/mock trial teams?

SPECIALTIES--Investigate what the school means when it says it offers special programs.

- For specialized areas of practice (tax, environment, sports, etc.), how many courses are offered in that area?
- How often are these courses offered? Every year, every two years?
- Is participation in specialty areas and organizations open to all or is it limited? What are the bases for selection?
- How does your program specifically differ from other schools' programs?
- Are there special relationships with firms are interested in employing graduates with these skills?

HOUSING--Investigate the housing situation on- and off-campus.

- Is graduate/law student housing available?
- Is off-campus housing available near the law school?
- Does the law school help students to find housing/roommates?
- What is the average cost of off-campus housing?
- Is parking difficult? Is there a public transportation system?

FINANCIAL AID--Determine how much law school will cost and what assistance is available.

- What should I anticipate that it would cost over three years to attend your law school? (include cost of living and potential tuition increases)
- How do most of your students pay for law school?
- How much scholarship money is available?
- What criteria are used to award merit-based and need-based scholarships? Is parents' income considered?
- How many awards are continued throughout the three years of law school? If continuation of the scholarship is based on maintaining a certain GPA, how many students maintain the GPA?
- What loan assistance/repayment programs does your school offer, if any?

Question Tip: Come prepared with questions you legitimately want to know the answer to. It will make you listen for the answer and allow you to engage organically with the rep. You may even have their answer generate a follow-up question.

AMBIANCE--Encourage the representative to talk about specific qualities of their school.

- Does the representative see ways in which the school differs from other schools? (This question really gives them the opportunity to talk about the wonders of their schools.)
- What schools/areas do students typically come from?
- Is there a part-time, summer, or night program?
- What is the attrition rate for first year students? What % leave for academic reasons?
- What percentage of the faculty and student body are women? Minorities?
- What is the attrition rate for first year students?
- Describe the physical location of the school. Is the area safe? Is a late-night escort service provided?
- When your students say what they like about your law school, what things are frequently mentioned?
- What complaints do your students have about your law school?
- What student groups are active at your school?
- How competitive are your students with each other?
- How accessible are faculty?

CAREER SERVICES--Investigate placement opportunities for graduates of the law school.

- Where do the students find employment? (locally, regionally, nationally)
- I want to start my career in [XX City]. How many graduates found employment there last year?
- Is there a network of contacts which could help me obtain jobs in a particular geographical area or in an area of law in which I am interested?
- Is the school committed to those students who are interested in public interest careers? Is there any loan forbearance for such careers?
- How many firms interview at the school and from what parts of the country?
- What percentage of students seek and get clerkships? Where are the clerkships located?
- Are clerking opportunities available in your city for students during the school year?
- What percentage of your third-year classes have jobs lined up by winter break?
- What resources do you provide for minority students?
- What percentage of jobs does the career placement office secure for students, and how many students find jobs on their own? How many full-time employees work in the placement office?

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