

The Pre-Law e-Newsletter from Pre-Professional Programs & Advising

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Monday, April 27, 2009 – Sunday, May 3, 2009

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1. Message from Ana L. Droscoski, Esq.
 2. The Law School Admission Test (LSAT): Q & A
 3. Internship Opportunity: Maryland Legal Aid Bureau Volunteer Internship
 4. Practitioner Interview: Matthew E. Scherneck, Esq., Corporate Attorney
 5. Upcoming Pre-Law Meetings and Program Announcements
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1. MESSAGE FROM ANA L. DROSCOSKI, ESQ.

Most everyone considering applying to law school has heard of and has questions about the LSAT. Read below for a general description of the test and a Q & A section on some of the more common concerns.

As many of you would like to explore public interest opportunities, this edition features a local internship with the Legal Aid Bureau.

For those of you that are considering the opposite path, and the possibility of a career in corporate law, an interview with a JHU alum who is a Corporate Finance/Private Equity Attorney at Morgan Lewis in NYC follows.

Finally, this is the concluding Pre-Law e-Newsletter for Spring 2009. Good luck to all in finishing up the semester and academic year. A big congratulations to the seniors!

2. THE LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST (LSAT): Q & A

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a half-day, standardized test administered four times each year at designated testing centers throughout the world. The LSAT consists of four graded parts ranging from 24 to 28 multiple choice questions. Those four sections are Reading Comprehension, Analytical Reasoning, Logical Reasoning I, and Logical Reasoning II. There is also an experimental section and a writing section, which are not scored. The experimental section is used to pretest new questions. Although the writing sample is not scored, copies are sent to all law schools applied to and is often referenced by admissions officers when reviewing an applicant's file. For each of the six sections, there is a 35-minute time allotment, with a 10 to 15 minute break at the end of the third section.

When Should I Take the LSAT?

Except for good reason (not being prepared is a good reason), a prelaw student at a college on the semester system, like JHU, should take the LSAT in June, following junior year. If convenient, a college graduate should take the LSAT 15-19 months prior to their intended start of law school.

When & How Should I Register for the LSAT?

LSAT registration can be done online (www.lsac.org), by phone, or by mail. To increase your chances of obtaining the LSAT test center of your choice, register online and early.

How is the LSAT Scored?

The LSAT is scored on a scale of 120 to 180. An LSAT score depends only on the number of correct answers. Test takers are not penalized for wrong answers, so guessing is better than leaving a blank answer.

How Can I Best Prepare for the LSAT?

The only way to prepare for the LSAT is to familiarize yourself with every component of the test. The National Association of Pre-Law Advisors' Handbook recommends two hours of concentrated practice a day, three months prior to the test, at the bare minimum.

There are a number of ways to study for the LSAT. The most popular way is by home study. You can use any available materials for home study. The LSAT/LSDAS Registration Booklet contains a practice LSAT. You may also order previous LSATs on your LSAT/LSDAS registration form. These released LSATs come in what is referred to as "The Official LSAT Prep Packages," complete with an actual, not simulated, exam, answers, and explanations to the questions and correct answers. Note that the Office of Pre-Professional Programs & Advising has copies of past, official LSATs in our library that are free and available for JHU student/alum use.

Another popular way to prepare for the LSAT is by taking an LSAT review course. The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) argues that review courses are of little or no use in preparing for the LSAT. Advocates of the review classes dispute this, claiming that they can help a student prepare for the LSAT. For the most part, if you are financially able, a professional prep course may be a good idea if you feel you may benefit from the structure and time management. Anything you can do to improve your LSAT score is a good investment. Two popular professional LSAT prep courses are PowerScore and TestMasters. There are many others out there. Prices for such classes can range from \$350 to \$1400. Scholarships may be available from the preparatory course based on demonstrated need.

What Are the National LSAT Averages for those Accepted to Law School?

For the 184 fully-accredited law schools and the 7 provisionally-accredited law schools, the average LSAT 25th percentile is 150.8 and the average LSAT 75th percentile is 156.2.

Why is the LSAT Required to Apply to Law School?

The LSAT intends to be a predictor of law school performance, specifically for your first year. While the best overall predictor of law school performance is a combination of the LSAT and UGPA, the LSAT is the only standardized measure that law schools have, as every applicant's undergraduate record is different.

Why is the LSAT Score so Important?

The LSAT is much more difficult and involves more logical thinking than the SAT, GRE or GMAT. The higher your LSAT score, the greater your chances are of admission to law school and of obtaining financial aid.

How Often Should I Take the LSAT?

Once! With the LSAT, do not plan on doubling your pleasure. When you walk in to take the LSAT, you should have the expectation of a score that you can be proud of based on your performance on actual, previously administered LSATs while studying. Do not take the LSAT unless you are ready. Unless your LSAT score is significantly below your score on actual, previously administered LSATs, you were ill or dealing with some other personal crisis the day of/immediately prior to the testing date, or you intend to change your way of studying, do not take the LSAT a second time. Law schools treat multiple LSAT scores in different ways, with some averaging multiple LSAT scores for admissions purposes and others considering the highest LSAT score only. Regardless, all law schools applied to will receive a report indicating all LSATs you attempted and completed.

What is the LSAT Percentile Rank?

Along with your numerical score, Law Services also reports a percentile rank, reflecting the percentage of candidates scoring below your reported test score. Over the past several years, a score of about 152 has fallen at approximately the 53rd percentile, while a score of about 164 has fallen at approximately the 90th percentile.

How Long is my LSAT Score Valid?

Law Services reports scores for five years. Scores for all LSAT exams taken in the five years prior to your application to law school will therefore be reported to the law schools you designate. Multiple scores will

be averaged by Law Services in its report to law schools. Copies of your writing samples for those tests will be included, up to a maximum of three samples. Note that some law schools will not accept a score earned more than three years prior to an application. Be sure to check with the individual law schools to which you apply to determine if you need a more current score. (See <http://www.prelawhandbook.com/lSAT>)

3. INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY: MARYLAND LEGAL AID BUREAU, VOLUNTEER INTERNSHIP

Maryland Legal Aid is a non-profit public interest law firm based in Baltimore. The Volunteer Internship is with the telephone hotline unit in the Baltimore City office and intended for a graduating senior. Anyone considering a career in public interest law or thinking about going to law school can gain a first-hand perspective into the operations of a public interest firm through this position.

The Volunteer Internship would begin immediately and run throughout the summer. At the conclusion of this summer term, it is possible that the internship could become a one year position that pays a small stipend. All applicants for this internship would be expected to be available for the one year post, if it is offered.

The Volunteer Internship is a general support staff position. Job responsibilities involve the typical set of legal support functions, but also incorporate a substantial degree of creative work. As such, daily tasks will vary greatly. Much of the work will be focused on helping to plan, design, and implement the future technological and procedural initiatives for the unit. In addition, the duties include regular work on the hotline itself.

Qualifications

- Graduating senior interested in a career in the law
- Commitment to the goals of public interest law
- Ability to work at least 30 hours a week during the summer
- If planning to go to law school, it cannot be before the 2010-2011 academic year
- No job or other commitment planned for the one year period following the summer of 2009
- A strong technological background and a familiarity with computers that goes beyond the basic user level. Applicants that have some background in computer programming preferred.
- Strong analytical skills. Applicants who have taken some science, math, or engineering courses preferred.
- Strong leadership skills, ability to work well with others in a professional setting, creativity and forward thinking, and confidence to utilize these skills in the unit on a daily basis

To Apply

Send the following to the Human Resources Unit via mail, fax, or email by May 4, 2009:

- 1) A resume detailing your post High School work/professional experiences and other achievements
- 2) A cover letter including your commitment to public interest, leadership abilities, evidence of your analytical and creative thinking skills, future plans, and availability this summer and beyond
- 3) An unofficial transcript for a review of completed courses (position is not a GPA contest)

Human Resources Unit
c/o Phillip Stillman
Legal Aid Bureau, Inc.
500 E. Lexington St.
Baltimore, MD 21202
fax: 410-951-7797
email: pstillman@mdlaborg

If you have any questions about the position, contact the Chief Attorney of the Hotline Unit, W.G. Pete Stokes, at wgstokes@mdlaboratory.org or 410-951-7766.

4. PRACTITIONER INTERVIEW: MATTHEW E. SCHERNECKE, ESQ., CORPORATE ATTORNEY

Matthew Edward Schernecke is an associate in Morgan Lewis's Business and Finance Practice. Mr. Schernecke has represented private equity sponsors in connection with leveraged buyouts and corporate borrowers in connection with acquisition-related financing, including cross-border transactions, as well as out-of-court restructurings and workouts. Prior to joining Morgan Lewis, Mr. Schernecke was a law clerk to Federal Magistrate Judge Cheryl L. Pollak of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Mr. Schernecke earned his J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School in 2002. While there, he was twice elected president of the student body, served as senior comments editor for the University of Chicago Roundtable journal, and received the Donald C. Egan Scholarship.

Mr. Schernecke received his B.A. in history from Johns Hopkins University in 1998. While there, he was elected president of the student body and received the Alexander K. Barton Cup. From 1998 to 2002, he served as a trustee of the Johns Hopkins University. Mr. Schernecke currently serves as the class agent for the Class of 1998 with the Johns Hopkins Alumni Association and is a member of the Johns Hopkins Second Decade Society for professional alumni leadership.

Mr. Schernecke is admitted to practice in New York.

Describe a day in the life of a Corporate Finance/Private Equity Attorney

My typical day starts early, on the blackberry. As soon as I get up (usually around 7:00), I check for e-mails that came in overnight and respond before I get ready (by the way, the blackberry is always right next to my bed). I usually aim to arrive at work by between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. In busy times, I will end up being at the office, on average, until 11:00 p.m. or later. In slower times, there is a lot less pressure from clients and so my hours are more manageable. During a "typical" day, I will often be on conference calls negotiating contracts and other documents with sophisticated lenders and borrowers, as well as in meetings to discuss similar matters. I also will be in charge of drafting documents and contracts. A surprisingly large responsibility is sending e-mails to clients and/or to opposing counsel and the ability to craft a crystal-clear e-mail is more important than people in college and law school probably realize.

What initially attracted you to this field? What are some of the rewards of this area of law?

I was attracted to this field from my summer associate experience at my firm, as well as from my coursework at law school. I really enjoy the back and forth of negotiation. It requires people skills and the ability to have a "softer" hand than is the case in litigation. One must be able to get the two sides to an agreement, and I view the corporate finance/private equity milieu as somewhat closer to a treaty negotiation between very sophisticated parties. Both sides always will have to compromise in some fashion, but one forces through the points that are most important to one's client while sacrificing some which are not as significant. The other rewards of this area of law are the ability to learn a great deal about every area of law; one encounters issues of all sorts including bankruptcy, commercial remedies, litigation, labor and employment, securities regulations, etc. A corporate finance lawyer becomes a generalist in many respects.

What are some of the downsides of this area of law? How would you compare the reality of your profession to the picture you had of it while in school?

The downside of this area of law very clearly lies in the hours requirements. The type of work that one does in this area lends itself to completely unpredictable schedules and the inability to plan social commitments in advance. Also, given the round-the-clock nature of the practice, one must be available by blackberry and cell essentially at all times. When things are slower, one can feel less interrupted by the work-life, but when things are busy, one does become very engrossed in the work. As to my picture of the profession in law school, I would not have imagined that the practice of law could be so commercial/corporate in nature. I never appear in court and I am as far from what you see on TV as you

could imagine. My practice is entirely conducted by phone, e-mail and in-person meetings and, if anything, I am more of a business-person than a lawyer, in the conventional sense.

Do you have any advice for an undergraduate interested in attending law school and, specifically, pursuing this body of law?

I would recommend taking as many background classes as you can in accounting, tax and corporate finance in college and law school. They may be boring, but they are cornerstones of the corporate finance and private equity practice. Also, be sure to keep a large social network and be flexible about things. To be successful in this game, being well-liked by your colleagues, and opposing counsel, can really help, because you will often come up against the same people deal after deal, so you don't want to make enemies of them.

Contact Information

If you would like to learn more about corporate law, or have more questions for Mr. Scherneck, you may email him at mscherneck@morganlewis.com or contact him by phone at 212.309.6135.

5. UPCOMING PRE-LAW MEETINGS AND PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming LSAT Administration for 2009

Location: On campus, Hodson 110 - check with LSDAS for additional testing locations

Date: Monday, June 8, 2009

Time: Registration begins at 12:30p - consult with LSDAS for all controlling details

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STAFF IN THE OFFICE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS AND ADVISING

Ana L. Droskoski, J.D., Assistant Director, who advises Pre-Law students:

Walk-ins: Monday/Thursday 10:00a - 11:30a

Appointments: Monday/Thursday 2:00p - 4:00p

Wednesday 10:00a - 11:30a & 2:00p - 3:00p

David Verrier, Ph.D., Director, who advises Pre-Health students:

Walk-ins: Wednesday/Friday 10:00a - 12:00p

Kirsten Kirby, M.S.Ed., Assistant Director, who advises Pre-Health students:

Walk-ins: Tuesday, Thursday 10:00a - 12:00p

The Administrative Coordinators are available to answer questions regarding your file:

Carolyn Mae Krause, Administrative Coordinator, [ckrause@jhu.edu](mailto:ckrause@jhu.edu) 410-516-6744

For students whose last name begins with A-L, contact Mrs. Krause.

LaTonia Sanders, Administrative Coordinator, [ladytee@jhu.edu](mailto:ladytee@jhu.edu) 410-516-4140

For students whose last name begins with P-Z, contact Mrs. Sanders.

Angie Decker, Office Manager and Staff Supervisor, [decker@jhu.edu](mailto:decker@jhu.edu)

Please feel free to use the resource library between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. everyday or visit our website <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/> for additional information.