

Contact Info:

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Explore Pre-Law at UWM

Preparation for law school is a continuous process. It involves planning an undergraduate program that develops the skills necessary for the successful study of law; learning about the law profession and career options; and participating in activities (extracurricular, volunteer, internships, related employment) that enhance and build on classroom learning.

Skills deemed most essential by law schools are written and verbal communication abilities, an organized and logical thought process, analytical reasoning, research, and strong habits of thoroughness, tenacity, and intellectual curiosity.

Pre-Law Majors

It is important to note that “pre-law” is not a major. There are no specific prerequisites needed to apply to law school, and there is no advantage to any one major over another. Successful law school applicants hold both Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees, and come from every major including the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, health sciences and more. Students should choose a major that they enjoy and will explore in great depth, and one in which they will excel. Courses in composition, literature, mathematics, science, philosophy (including logic), history, political science, public speaking, and economics may be particularly valuable because they involve complex topics and require significant analysis, writing, and presentation.

The most common majors among law school applicants are political science, history, criminal justice, English, and psychology. However, the majors with the highest acceptance rates are physics, philosophy, biology, chemistry, and anthropology.

UWM Advantages

Students in the pre-law program at UWM have several unique opportunities to enhance their preparation for law school outside of the classroom:

» **Milwaukee Justice Center Internships:** Unpaid internships are available at the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Interns work for 8 to 10 hours per week at the Family Law Help Desk providing assistance with legal forms and basic procedural questions for individuals representing themselves in court. Interns also have the opportunity to observe court proceedings.

» **UWM University Legal Clinic:** Located in the Student Union, the University Legal Clinic assists students with common legal problems they may become involved with including landlord disputes, underage drinking citations, traffic violations, divorce, and noise complaints. The Clinic offers internships and volunteer opportunities for students to gain hands-on legal experience.

» **UWM Pre-Law Society:** The Pre-Law Society is a student organization where students network with other individuals interested in the field of law. The Society holds regular meetings during the academic year, brings in guest speakers, and sponsors trips off-campus to explore law schools and other opportunities related to the legal profession.

» **Law Sports:** UWM was one of the first public universities in the country to have three law sports

Quick Fact: There are more than 200 law schools in the U.S. approved by the American Bar Association (ABA). Two are in Wisconsin: Marquette University and the University of Wisconsin (Madison).

groups: Mock Trial, Moot Court and Mediation. UWM's Mock Trial program is one of the nation's oldest and consistently achieves national recognition. In Mock Trial, students "learn by doing" jury trial components, including witness testimony/retort, direct and cross examination, opening statements and summation. Intercollegiate Moot Court involves simulation of oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court. Students prepare highly-detailed arguments for regional and national competition based on extensive published precedent. Intercollegiate Mediation simulates advanced alternate dispute resolution strategies and mediation. UWM teams have appeared in the National Championship Final Mediation multiple times in the past ten years.

Advising

Regardless of the major, students who identify themselves as on a pre-law track will receive specialized advising from a pre-law advisor who has a thorough understanding of the law school admissions process. This advisor will also provide information on upcoming campus visits by law schools, local and regional law school fairs, LSAT preparation, and other valuable tips for creating a competitive law school application packet.

After College

To become a practicing licensed attorney, three years of law school is required beyond college leading to the Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree. Following law school, each student must also pass the bar exam in every state where he/she wishes to practice law. The State of Wisconsin offers a very narrow exemption to this rule – students who graduate from one of the accredited law schools in Wisconsin (Marquette University or the University of Wisconsin) are automatically licensed in Wisconsin. State of Wisconsin residents who attend an out-of-state law school are not eligible for this exemption and must take the Wisconsin bar exam to practice in the state.

Career Outlook

Lawyers advise and represent individuals, businesses, or government agencies on legal issues, disputes or business transactions. Traditionally, lawyers have found jobs in private practice, ranging from single person firms to mega-firms of several hundred attorneys; in the legal office of corporations and businesses; or in government agencies. However, it is now much more common to find lawyers in all types of professions where they may not directly practice law but where knowledge of the law is helpful. This includes human resources, labor relations, banking and financial services, marketing, journalism, politics, real estate, risk management, and much more.

Students who are flexible and open minded about alternative career paths may find more success since the demand for private practice and corporate lawyers has slowed. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects below average growth for attorneys between 2014 and 2024 and median salaries have fallen in this profession to \$116,000.

Testing Information: Law school applicants take the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), usually during the junior year of college. The test consists of five 35-minute sections of multiple-choice questions measuring reading and comprehension; organization and management of information; critical thinking; and reasoning and analysis of arguments. A 35-minute writing sample concludes the half-day test.

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