

**PLANC**

***PRE-LAW ADVISORS  
NATIONAL COUNCIL***

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**ROLES AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES OF  
PRE-LAW ADVISORS**

**2026**

# OVERVIEW



Prelaw advisors play a critical role in guiding students through what can be a complicated process. This includes providing information about the profession, how to prepare academically for law school, and how to navigate the actual application process with competitive applications. Prelaw advising involves connecting with prospective students, students in their first years of college, those in their last two years, and, increasingly, with alumni. The most time-intensive work is centered around those students preparing for an application cycle but the foundation for successful advising is often laid well before that.

It is important to note that the goal of prelaw advising is not necessarily admission to law school, though that will be the outcome for many advisees. Instead, prelaw advisors provide students with guidance they need in order to make thoughtful decisions about their career. For this reason, it is important that prelaw advisors maintain independence in their work. It is not appropriate to evaluate a prelaw advisor on the number of students admitted or attending law school because that outcome might not be the best outcome for the student. It is quite common to meet with a student expressing interest in law school who does not have a clear understanding of what the career involves. There may be pressure from family or friends on that student to apply to law school even if it is not what they want. A good prelaw advisor is able to be an unbiased source of information to help guide an advisee to make the decision that is best for them.

# GUIDE

The guide that follows is intended to offer an overview of the tasks that prelaw advisors undertake and a sense of the best practices and expectations. It is not a replacement for ongoing professional development and training, but is instead a starting point for understanding the role.

The activities of prelaw advisors can be divided into three categories of work.

**First**, and most centrally, is the actual advising with students.

**Second**, and a valuable support for the advising work, is the development of programming.

**Finally**, a critical piece that can be overlooked is the role of communication with potential and actual advisees.



# ADVISING

Serving as a prelaw advisor involves academic, career, and personal counseling in addition to sharing knowledge about the application process. Good advising will integrate each of these and often requires multiple meetings with students.

Meetings with students early in their academic careers will often focus on:

## ● **Resources on the legal profession so that students can learn more about what lawyers actually do**

From these meetings, students should develop a clearer understanding of what it means to be a lawyer. This helps advisees evaluate whether it is the right career choice for them. Informational interviews with practicing attorneys, podcasts, panel discussions with alumni, and books can all be useful for this.

## ● **What to major in**

Academically, students need to know that law schools do not require a particular major or any specific classes. Instead, it is more beneficial for students to major in areas that are interesting to them. This will help them build the intellectual curiosity they will need in law school and it will also likely translate into a stronger GPA.

## ● **What classes to take and skills to develop**

The choice of specific classes should reflect a focus on building important skills rather than just looking for classes that are related to law. Writing and analytical thinking are highly valued by law schools and can be developed in a wide variety of classes. Throughout, students should do their best to be academically successful in appropriately challenging courses.

# PREPARATION

## ● Professional preparation

Students often want to know what else they should be doing besides course work to best prepare for law school. Conversations around internships, work, volunteering, and involvement in student organizations are important to have. Building professional experience is quite beneficial in the application process but that will look different for each student. Some students will already be working full-time while taking classes and encouraging them to add more to their plate may be counterproductive. Others will try to join as many student organizations as they can. In this case, it is more beneficial to focus on those activities that the student finds meaningful and which support the narrative they are building about themselves for law schools and beyond. Relevant professional experience is not limited to just working in the legal field. Students interested in practicing in criminal law, for example, would benefit from interning with non-profits that are working to address the causes of crime in communities. Help students to think creatively and broadly about what experience will best help them. Relatedly, professional networking early and often can help position students well when it comes to seeking employment opportunities.

## ● Personal preparation

Sometimes prelaw advising looks more like other types of academic advising that happens. Students sometimes need guidance on habits and practices that can lead to better academic performance. They might need help understanding how managing any mental health challenges is important to address before starting law school. Avoiding student conduct violations, particularly related to academic dishonesty, is important to emphasize. Another personal consideration that matters for many students regarding law school is managing undergraduate debt and finances so that they are prepared to manage the costs of law school.

# APPLICATIONS

Through all these subjects, it is particularly important to be conscious of the specific needs and challenges faced by first-generation students and others from underrepresented communities in the legal profession. Resources specific to these student populations are available and should be shared as appropriate.

Once students- or alumni, as law schools increasingly value time between undergraduate and starting law school- have confirmed that law is the right career choice for them, they will need substantial assistance through the application process:

## ● **Choosing where to apply**

The process of selecting where to apply is an ongoing and iterative process depending on a number of factors. Applicants should begin this exploratory process early. Geography often plays an important role for many students since most lawyers practice within 100 miles of where they went to law school. Other factors may be school ranking, career goals, and cost. An initial list is helpful but should remain fluid and flexible until the student's test scores and GPA are fully known.

## ● **Thinking about financing law school**

Managing the cost of law school is an important consideration for any applicant. While pre-law advisors are not expected to be financial aid experts, you should encourage students to familiarize themselves with the estimated Cost of Attendance for each school they are interested in along with typical amounts of financial aid offered by the school. Connecting students with resources like AccessLex can be particularly valuable, especially as the financial aid landscape is changing frequently.

# TIMELINE



## ● **Timeline of applications**

Though law schools often list application deadlines in the spring, admissions are carried out on a rolling basis. Students applying late in the cycle are at a significant disadvantage when it comes to both admissions and financial aid. Students should plan to apply by fall of the year before they plan to start law school. They need to make sure all of their application materials are prepared by then.

## ● **Law School Admission Council (LSAC)**

Students (and advisors) need to be familiar with the LSAC because this is the organization through which they will apply to any American Bar Association accredited law school. The LSAC also administers the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and provides preparatory material for that exam. It is free to set up an LSAC account and can be done at any time. Other services from LSAC have fees, though fee waivers are available.

## ● **Law School Admission Test (LSAT)**

This test is a major component of most admissions decisions by law schools. Students should prepare for this test over six to eight months, practicing extensively to answer the questions as quickly and accurately as possible. Many students benefit from prep classes, though these are not required. The LSAT is by far the most common test used by law school admissions teams, but the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and JD-Next are also accepted by some law schools and there are always efforts to develop alternative ways of evaluating student readiness. Remain aware of these developments and listen to what law schools have to say about what they are using in their decisions.

# ELEMENTS

## ● **Credential Assembly Service (CAS)**

The CAS is the actual mechanism by which students will apply to law school. Administered by LSAC, CAS allows students to put all of their application materials in one place and then to select which schools receive them. There is a simulation site available to prelaw advisors so that you can help students navigate it.

## ● **Personal Statement**

The personal statement for each school is a candidate's opportunity to share a part of their story with the admissions committee. While the content of a personal statement may compliment other aspects of the application, it should not repeat other content, such as serving as an expanded version of a resume. It is important that the candidate follow the parameters set forth by each school. A candidate may need to write more than one, depending on the prompts of the schools to which they are applying.

## ● **Letters of Recommendation**

Law schools require letters of recommendation and they give the greatest weight to letters from instructors who can speak to an applicant's academic abilities and from work supervisors who can speak to their experience managing responsibilities. Applicants should not seek letters from family members or friends, since they may not be able to give an unbiased perspective. They also should not seek letters from recognizable figures unless those people know the applicant well and can speak to their strengths. It is recommended that candidates make every effort to secure letters as requested on the application - for some candidates, that might mean staying in touch with faculty after graduation if they are not applying to law school during their senior year.

# DECISIONS

## ● Remaining application elements

The weight of remaining elements of the application vary from school to school. It is commonly emphasized that the law school application is viewed holistically; therefore, each element needs to be assembled thoughtfully and carefully. A resume can capture the breadth of activities and experience from an applicant while an addendum on the GPA can explain a drop in grades during one term. For the character and fitness questions, it is important for students to disclose as much as they can since this will be reviewed when they eventually apply to be admitted to the bar and withholding information can be seen as a violation of the character and fitness expectations of the profession.

## ● Making a final decision

The work of the prelaw advisor does not end once the application is submitted. Applicants may need guidance on how to select which school to attend if they are admitted to more than one, whether to accept admission at all, and whether to consider reapplying in the following cycle. Assistance with evaluating choices can be extremely valuable here and requires careful conversation and listening to the needs of your advisee. As with the initial decision, cost, ranking, and geography are all likely to be important.



# PROGRAMMING

A major component of the work of a pre-law advisor is coordinating programming on your campus. This programming can take a number of forms, and often is done in collaboration with law schools. Because of this, PLANC has put together an extensive [Events Best Practices Guide](#) that covers forums, law fairs, and visits to and from law schools.

In addition to events that are done in collaboration with law schools, pre-law advisors may choose to host workshops or events on their campus that highlight aspects of the application process, such as overviews, or more specific events focusing on the personal statement, or LSAT preparation.

Programs that help students explore the legal field are also a critical part of the work of a pre-law advisor. This can take a number of forms, including a panel of alumni who work in the legal field, a speed networking event with several legal professionals, or multi-day long programs that pair students with professionals in the field to shadow their work. Mentor programs can be a time intensive undertaking, but can be very valuable for students - pairing students with either law students, or legal professionals can provide them with other avenues of support in their application and exploration process.

Law school admissions offices are excellent partners in this work - consider reaching out to law schools where your students typically apply to build partnerships and programs together.



# COMMUNICATION

Pre-law advisors are a conduit of information for students—keeping them informed about events and programming, both on campus and beyond, pre-law resources, deadlines, and more. There are many tools and strategies that can be employed to find pre-law students, engage them, and keep them apprised of important information.

## ● **Have a webpage**

Having a webpage with an overview of the law school application process and your campus' pre-law resources will allow students to discover where to go for more information and who to contact for advising. As these are usually public websites, a general pre-law website is also available for alumni and prospective students who have not yet enrolled.

## ● **An email newsletter**

This can be an excellent tool to share current information with students and alumni, such as upcoming events or deadline reminders. Newsletters can be sent on a schedule that accommodates your resources—weekly, monthly, once-per-semester, or when there is sufficient information to share.

## ● **Using your Learning Management System**

An alternative to maintaining a database of newsletter subscribers, is to use your campus' Learning Management System (LMS), such as Canvas or Blackboard. Consider creating a pre-law course in the LMS platform that allows students to self-enroll. Having resources in the LMS allows you to create a hub of pre-law advising materials, such as recorded workshops, timelines and checklists, upcoming events, contact information for pre-law advisors, and links to vital resources. You can reach out to students through the LMS course announcements which can be sent directly to students' emails and create a calendar of events with reminders.

# OUTREACH

## ● Outreach to law schools and community partners

Law schools are an excellent resource for pre-law advisors! Are you looking for an in-person or virtual guest speaker about the law school programs, financial aid, or a specific aspect of the application process? Reach out to law school admissions offices.

## ● Build a relationship with your local bar associations

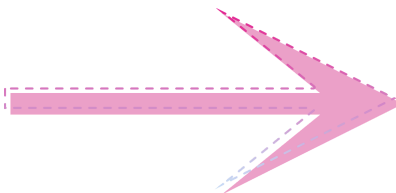
They can provide speakers on careers in law and practice areas, paths to the legal profession, and mentoring opportunities.

## ● Create visibility on campus

If your campus allows students to identify as pre-law or law-interested, or if you have a legal studies major or minor, or other law-related program—that is a great resource! You can easily reach out to potential pre-law students and advisees. But those resources will not capture all students curious about or interested in going to law school. Having a visible presence on campus can help you connect with pre-law students.

## ● Go where the students are

Clubs, honor societies, and student affinity organizations are all good groups to connect with. Student pre-law clubs are an obvious way to find your population but reach out to other groups, too. Share events with student groups and offer to be a guest speaker at meetings about careers in law, the law school application process, or other topics that may be of interest.



# ENGAGE

## ● Engage

Engage with faculty, particularly those who teach law courses, and keep them informed about pre-law resources, events, and where to direct students who want pre-law advising.

## ● Connect

Work with your campus alumni center to find mentors, guest speakers, and support for pre-law advising.



## CONCLUSION

**Here are some final helpful tips for being an effective prelaw advisor:**

### ● Stay on top of trends

Law school admissions is an area that is regularly undergoing changes. Some changes are small while others can be quite significant. Knowing what is happening will help your advisees navigate out of date information.

**● Join your regional Association of Prelaw Advisors (APLA), attend professional development conferences, and register with PLANC's email list**

Connecting with colleagues engaging in prelaw advising is a tremendous help for figuring out what law schools are looking for, what tools are most effective, and how to navigate situations where the best advice is not obvious.

# CONCLUSION

## ● Make sure you are registered with LSAC as a prelaw advisor

Registered prelaw advisors with LSAC will receive regular communication about updates as well as grant access to the Prelaw Advisor Dashboard and all of the many reports and tools available through that system.

## ● Track your advising time and make your work visible

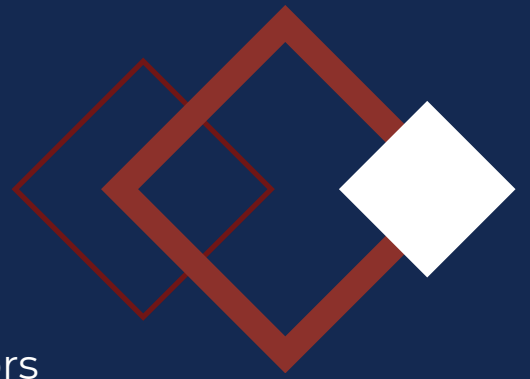
This is important whether you are a staff advisor or faculty. Many people do not have a good sense of just how much time goes into effective advising. Being able to demonstrate how many hours you spend on prelaw advising can make that clear to supervisors and in promotion and tenure evaluations. It is also helpful to make the work that you do visible to those outside of your advisees. Consider generating an annual report where you include data about just how much work you have done.

## ● Take the lead, but share the work where possible

The ability to share advising responsibilities will vary depending on the size and type of institution, but partnerships between staff and faculty advisors are often very fruitful. Trying to manage prelaw advising single-handedly can be difficult to do and you will typically benefit from sharing that effort across other people both internal and external to your institution. However, it is important to make sure that everyone involved in pre-law advising on your campus has accurate and up-to-date information.



# THANK YOU



Thank you to all the dedicated pre-law advisors working diligently to serve students.

Thank you to PLANC's Roles & Responsibilities Committee. To learn more about engaging with PLANC or your local Association of Pre-Law Advisors (APLA), please contact a PLANC Board member.

<https://www.planc.org>