



# PLANC Points

Newsletter of the Pre-Law Advisors National Council  
[PLANC.org](http://PLANC.org)

Fall 2022

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## Regional Pre-Law Advising Associations

- Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors ([MAPLA](#))
- Northeast Association of Pre-Law Advisors ([NAPLA](#))
- Pacific Coast Association of Pre-Law Advisors ([PCAPLA](#))
- Southern Association of Pre-Law Advisors ([SAPLA](#))
- Southwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors ([SWAPLA](#))
- Western Association of Pre-Law Advisors ([WAPLA](#))



## Chair's Message

Mike Vitlip, J.D., PLANC Chair  
Director of Legal and STEM Professions Advising, Office of Student & Post-Graduate Development, Franklin & Marshall College

The end of the year provides us an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of the past year, as well as to look ahead to the coming year with hope for what will come.

The past year has seen many of us return to some semblance of normal, and we have enjoyed gathering, in-person, with family, friends, colleagues, and students. It is hard to believe that it was just one year ago that I was writing about PLANC having its first hybrid board meeting in an attempt to gather in-person again for the first time in nearly two years. Over the past year, your regional APLAs have been hard at work planning conferences and other opportunities for gathering together and advancing the profession. The coming year will provide additional opportunities for professional development, including many opportunities for in-person conferences across the country. If you have not already considered submitting a proposal for a conference session, I encourage you to do so. Presenting at pre-law conferences is not only a tremendous way to contribute to the development of pre-law students beyond your home campus, but it is also an extremely fulfilling and rewarding experience in its own right. I have always left pre-law conferences full of energy, enthusiasm, and great ideas to implement in my own program.

Speaking of rewarding conferences, planning is underway for PLANC 2024 in New Orleans! This will be the first national pre-law advising conference to take place in eight years, and I hope that all of you will be able to attend! Our Conference Chair (Kevin Freeman) and Conference Program Chair (Rita Ralston) are doing fantastic work to ensure that this event has something to offer everyone – both experienced and inexperienced pre-law advisors alike. Keep an eye to your email in the coming months for opportunities to get involved in conference planning and to submit a proposal to

present. PLANC 2024 is truly one of those things to look forward to in the coming year (and a half)!

In addition to conference planning, PLANC has spent much of the past year working on strategic planning, evaluating the best way that PLANC can serve the regional APLA's and, by extension, the pre-law profession as a whole. A big thank you to Martha Kirby for all she is doing in chairing the committee and pushing the monumental strategic planning process forward. The committee has already generated a number of exciting ideas that we are looking forward to sharing in the year ahead.

This past year we have seen a great deal of change in the law school admission realm. From upcoming revisions to the LSAT and adoption of the GRE by many law schools, to the ABA's consideration of eliminating the testing requirement for law schools' admission process and the creation and rollout of LawReady, it has never been more important to have your finger on the pulse of what is taking place in law school admissions. If you are looking for a way to not only stay atop of these changes, but to have an impact on the pre-law community during this time of change, consider getting involved with your regional APLA. These regional pre-law advising communities have a number of opportunities for getting involved, and they are making an impact on the pre-law services being provided to prospective law students across the country. As someone who spent years on the NAPLA board, I can share that getting involved was one of the most impactful decisions of my career.

As we say goodbye to 2022 and look ahead at what is to come in 2023, I hope that you are filled with optimism and hope. Take time with family and friends to recharge and to celebrate – you deserve it! I wish you all a wonderful and happy holiday season and a joyous start to 2023.

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## 2022 Wilson Award for Excellence in Pre-Law Advising

**The winner of the 2022 Wilson Award for Excellence in Pre-Law Advising is Dr. Ana Alvarez!**



Ana serves as SWAPLA President, and is the Assistant Director, [Institute for Law and Public Affairs](#) and Pre-Law Advisor at University of Texas at San Antonio.

Ana is a dedicated and passionate pre-law professional, advising leading and successful programming at UTSA for over 10 years. Her leadership in SWAPLA and service to PLANC is invaluable.

Congratulations, Ana!

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## Tech Out Your Advising

Wendy Watson, J.D., Ph.D  
Principal Lecturer, Department of Political Science,  
University Pre-Law Advisor, University of North  
Texas

About six months ago, I surveyed members of the PLANC email list about their workload. I felt like I was drowning in an ever-expanding sea of expectations, and there was no institutional life raft available. The responses were sobering. I quickly realized that, if anything, I have it easy. While that left me without leverage to seek support from my administration, it inspired me to break out the metaphorical glue gun and DIY a system that looks professional but does not take every ounce of my energy. In the process, I developed a suite of tech platforms and tools that have made my life considerably easier.

### **Loomly ([loomly.com](#))**

Loomly is one of many social media managers. I do pay for Loomly, but a nominal fee. Loomly allows you to draft and schedule posts across all your social media platforms in a single place. After crafting the basic post, you can tweak it for each individual platform (adding hashtags or mentions, for example). Loomly gives you suggestions to optimize your posts (for example, it may tell you that a particular day or time is not ideal for Instagram or that a post would be more effective with a question). At the beginning of the term, I created and scheduled all of the social media posts about my events and various LSAC deadlines in a single day. Set it and forget it.

### **Canva ([canva.com](#))**

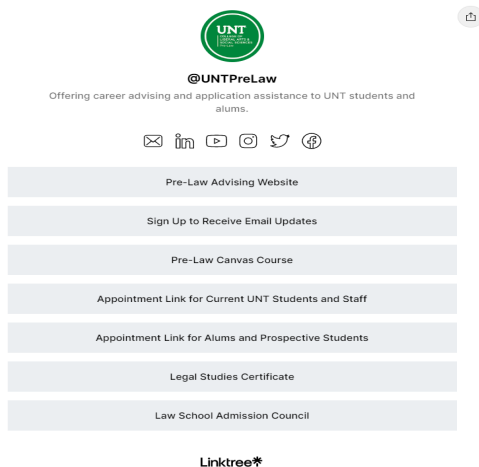
If you have friends in student affairs, you have probably heard of Canva. It is an incredibly intuitive graphic design platform, and anyone with a .edu email account can get access to all of the pro features for free. You can either customize a premade template or start from scratch, with the dimensions of the specific document type (Facebook header, Instagram post, trifold brochure, etc.) already configured.

Canva allows you to create a “brand kit.” I have added all of my institution’s visual branding to my kit: the colors, the fonts, my own logo, etc. This allows me to customize the existing templates with my school’s colors and create visually cohesive materials. For events, I typically create an Instagram image, as that format works on all social media platforms and embeds nicely in emails and newsletters.

### **Mailchimp ([mailchimp.com](https://mailchimp.com))**

Mailchimp is another platform I pay for, but you will have to pry it from my cold dead fingers before I give it up. I use Mailchimp to send out newsletters about events, deadlines, and opportunities. My mailing list has over 1300 subscribers, almost evenly split between current students and alumni. The email design process uses a simple drag-and-drop interface, and you can create a template to speed things up. In addition to creating professional-looking newsletters with minimal effort, the advantages are that individuals can subscribe and unsubscribe without my assistance; the site provides analytics about the percent of emails that are opened and the click-through rate; and it has integrations with a variety of other services (including Canva) to limit the amount of downloading/uploading that has to occur.

### **LinkTree ([linktr.ee](https://linktr.ee))**



LinkTree (free for the basic account) creates a branded landing page that you can populate with all of your links. On mine, I have links to my

primary webpage, my pre-law Canvas course, my email sign-up, my scheduling pages, and more. In addition, LinkTree has social icons for just about every platform out there. With a single QR code (generated by LinkTree), I can connect students to every facet of my web presence and to useful resources such as the LSAC website. I have done away with brochures. Instead, I have a simple sign with the QR code for tabling events and postcards with the QR code to leave around campus. Even if all of my individual links change over time, my LinkTree does not.

If you are interested in seeing the product of any of these platforms, you can find me at [Linktr.ee/UNTPreLaw](https://linktr.ee/UNTPreLaw) or email me at [wendy.watson@unt.edu](mailto:wendy.watson@unt.edu) for information.

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## Guiding Pre-law Students Who Don't Want to be Lawyers

Leslie Oster, Director, Master of Science in Law Program at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law

We've all seen it before: undergraduate students who go through the motions of taking the perfect courses, stressing over prerequisites, and cramming for the LSAT only to realize they don't want to be lawyers or aren't ready to commit to three years of law school. Now what?

Fortunately, there are options that you, as pre-law advisors, can share with these students – including options that involve law school. Students who previously would have pivoted away from law study because they didn't want to “go all the way” now can add legal skills to their toolkits.

### For the Evolving Student: A Master's Degree in Law

In today's legal education landscape, schools are modernizing their offerings, providing different

entry points to the study of law that don't necessarily involve a JD. These options are perfect for students who are interested in law, but not necessarily interested in becoming a lawyer.

## Three Benefits of a Law Master's Degree

A master's degree in law is beneficial in the following ways:

- **Legal master's degrees provide a gateway for young professionals to enter cutting-edge industries.** In today's ever-evolving business landscape, sectors such as healthcare, fintech, cannabis, and biotech all need employees with legal understanding who can comply with regulatory processes and procedures. This need for employees who are equipped to interact with the law is creating new and endless opportunities for the next generation of professionals. For example, a student with an interest in medicine may enroll in a legal master's program to study healthcare policy before going on to medical school or even a career in healthcare-tech. A different student with an interest in business or finance may utilize a legal program to learn about contracts and fintech regulation. An engineer may even learn how to design a product that is consistent with emerging AI and relevant regulatory schemes.
- **Legal master's degrees create interdisciplinary and holistic thinkers.** Legal skills are especially effective when combined with other disciplines (including STEM, social science, and business); and master's programs in law allow students to combine their interests and utilize them together. Moreover, these programs allow young professionals to learn a

valuable style of thinking – some would call it “thinking like a lawyer.”

- **Legal master's programs offer more equitable access to graduate degrees.** It's no secret that law school is expensive and can present other barriers to entry, such as competitive test scores and high application fees. A master's degree in law provides a worthwhile investment for someone who has an interest in studying law but isn't certain they can afford – or want to compete for a spot in – a three-year program.

## Advisor Tips

If this is the first time you are hearing about master's degrees for pre-law students, here are some tips for vetting reputable programs:

- **Investigate who teaches the classes.** A good law school program will have a high-level instructor pool. Look at where instructors are coming from: Is the school bringing in faculty from the JD program or does the program only consist of secondary staff?
- **Review program data.** Look for clues that the school can vouch for its successes. Career stats and a diverse graduate pool say a lot about a law degree's quality.
- **Consider program structure.** Evaluate the type of internal support and resources behind a program. Does the school care about the value and quality of the degree, its curriculum, and its staff? Is the program tied to the mission of the school?

## Guiding Students

When guiding pre-law students down the right path, there is no one-size-fits-all approach; the increase in degree options for those interested in law is a welcome advance in legal education. For those pre-law students who are interested in



policy, business and entrepreneurship, evolving technologies, or interdisciplinary pursuits – or for those students who don't fit the JD mold – a master's degree in law may be the perfect fit.

***For more information about Northwestern Pritzker School of Law's Master of Science in Law Program, please email [Ashlee Hardgrave](mailto:ashlee.hardgrave@northwestern.edu).***

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## LSAC Launches New Pathway to Law School

Chris Snyder, Director of New Product Development for LSAC

In March 2022, LSAC announced a new initiative designed to provide students with a holistic pathway to law school. The program, which will be delivered through undergraduate institutions, will help students develop skills critical for law school success, learn to navigate the admission process, and acquire the tools they need to build a network to support them during law school.

The new initiative is now known as LawReady™, and LSAC has been working hard to shape LawReady into a program that not only promises to open new opportunities to students who otherwise might not contemplate a career in law, but also offers a valid pathway to law school admission that will complement the proven LSAT.

Although studies consistently show that the LSAT is the single best predictor of law school success, and that the predictive validity and reliability of the LSAT are consistent across all racial, ethnic and gender groups, LSAC would be the first to say that a standardized test should be only one part of a holistic admission process that looks at the whole candidate. Properly used, the LSAT can be a powerful tool for enhancing

access and diversity. We believe that, once fully developed, LawReady will provide a second, valid alternative for law school admission.

The initial response we've received from law schools to LawReady has been overwhelmingly positive. To date, nearly 75 law schools have signed on as LawReady participating schools, agreeing to consider LawReady as part of their holistic admission process. The LawReady team is encouraged that schools recognize the value of the program in preparing students for success in law school and beyond. A full list of the participating law schools is [available on LSAC's website](#).

LSAC's LawReady team has been taking steps to design the best program to support students. To do that, the team has engaged an advisory committee comprised of higher education and industry leaders whose insights will help strengthen the development of the program. LSAC has also created the LawReady Higher Education Institution Design Partners program which includes academic leaders, pre-law advisors, students, DEI staff, and career services staff to work with LSAC as the program is built.

LSAC launched a pilot study at four undergraduate institutions this fall: Cornell College, George Mason University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and the University of South Alabama. Two additional schools – the University at Albany and Dillard University – will join the pilot study in the spring. The data from the pilot study will help LSAC examine the validity of the program's measures and the effectiveness of the program in helping students develop the skills, abilities, and personal qualities critical for law school success.

### **What does this mean for pre-law advisors?**

The LawReady program presents a fantastic opportunity for LSAC to partner with pre-law advisors to help your students succeed.

Schools that adopt the program will meet with LSAC to select your existing courses that teach the skills, abilities, and personal qualities (SAQs) identified as being critical for law school success. These skills include reasoning, argumentative writing, speaking, active listening, time management, effort, attention to detail, working constructively with others, and open-mindedness. LSAC will provide research-based measures such as quizzes, assessments, and scoring rubrics to gauge students' progress and proficiency on LawReady's SAQs.

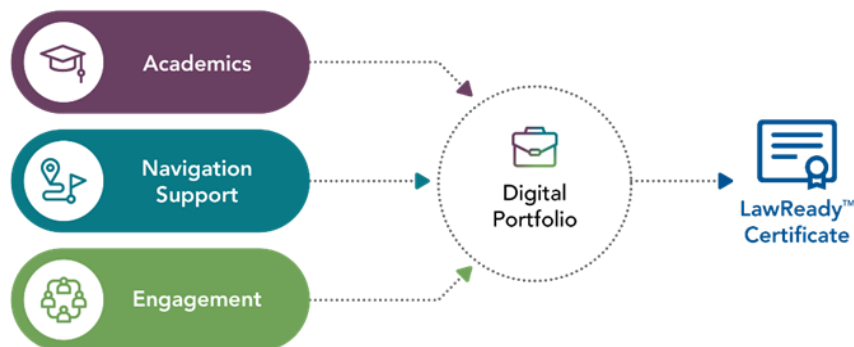
In addition to the academic components, the program includes navigation and engagement support. Students will explore different pathways to law careers through mentorships, tailored resources, and activities; receive personalized support with the law school application process from LSAC experts; and develop a sense of belonging during their exploration of law school and the legal profession by building relationships through peer affinity groups and participating in insightful workshops.

The program will culminate with a portfolio of work, and students who demonstrate proficiency in key skills based on their performance on the LawReady measures will earn the LawReady certificate, signaling their readiness for law school. This certificate can be submitted to law schools when students are ready to apply.

LawReady has been designed as a collaboration between LSAC and undergraduate institutions. A key component of that collaboration will be the role pre-law advisors play in the legal education pipeline. LSAC has been encouraged by the many conversations the LawReady team has had with pre-law advisors about the program, and we look forward to connecting with representatives from more schools in the future.

For more information about how to bring LawReady to your campus, contact LSAC at [LawReadyinfo@LSAC.org](mailto:LawReadyinfo@LSAC.org).

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# PLANC Board

[planc.org/leadership](http://planc.org/leadership)

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