The Yale Undergraduate Pre-Law Resources Handbook

Prepared by the Yale College Council
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The Yale Undergraduate Pre-Law Resources Handbook

A Word:

While Yale College is continuously working towards expanding the pre-law resources offered to its undergraduate students, it can still be a challenge for prospective law students to navigate the existing resources. The purpose of this handbook is to synthesize all of the resources Yale College offers to its students and to provide advice that prospective law school students should consider while pursuing their path of legal education.
Undergraduate Resources

Where to Start

The Yale Office of Career Strategies website (https://ocs.yale.edu/) is a great place to start to find all of the resources that Yale College provides to prospective law students.

- The "Applying to Graduate & Professional Study: Law School" tab on the main OCS webpage offers:
  
  - An overview on various careers in law
  - Access to a pre-law portal run by the National Association for Law Placement
  - Options for financing law school
  - A two-year and one-year law school application timeline
  - Resources for practice LSAT and GRE exams
  - A list of law school application materials
  - A link to make appointments with a pre-law advisor

- The "OCS Calendar" tab on the main OCS webpage provides:
  
  - Information on all upcoming OCS events
  - A search bar: useful to search the term "law" for pre-law events
  - A schedule for events like law school information sessions, fellowship information sessions, and legal networking events
- The "Yale Career Link" tab on the main OCS webpage provides:
  
  • Direct access to the Yale Career Link portal powered by Symplicity which includes:
  • Access to a search tool to find opportunities offered by Preferred Yale Partners
  • An Employer Directory to research thousands of employers and contacts
  • A document library that provides access to Yale students and recent graduates willing to discuss their experiences
  • Mock interview practice
  • Access to CareerShift: a portal that synthesizes information from thousands of employer websites ¹

There are also several resources that prospective law school students should seek out for advising.

- Though the Yale Career Link, students can schedule appointments with pre-law advisors who hold office hours and individual appointments

- Several residential colleges in Yale University offer Yale Law School affiliates to whom students can reach out: ²

¹ The above information was gathered from The Office of Career Strategy website: https://ocs.yale.edu/
² The information below as well as further information about residential college fellows can be found on the residential college websites.
- Several residential colleges in Yale University offer fellows who work in the field of law to whom students can reach out (not all of the fellows associated with law are listed for each college; some colleges only list residential fellows):

  - Berkeley College
  - Branford College
  - Davenport College
  - Ezra Stiles College
  - Pierson College
  - Saybrook College
  - Silliman College
  - Trumbull College
What to Get Involved With

There are several **extracurricular organizations** on campus that undergraduates can get involved with to increase their exposure to law. Some of these include:

- **Yale Undergraduate Legal Aid Association**: An organization focused on human rights, legal aid issues, and advocacy initiatives both on and off campus. Volunteer-based. Specifically focuses on the criminal justice system, refugee resettlement, asylum-seeking, and immigration. Projects include: Police Brutality Mapping Project; FreshStart Volunteering; Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project: Legal Document Translation and Resource Mapping; U Visa Volunteering; CT Bail Fund; City Hall Youth Reentry Research; NHLAA Translation; Know Your Rights Workshop.³

- **Lawyers Without Borders**: Organization that manages pro bono lawyers around the world who focus on justice initiatives, capacity building, and rule of law projects.⁴

- **Yale Mock Trial Team**: One of the top college Mock Trial teams in the country. Student-run extracurricular split into three teams with varying time commitment.⁵

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³ This information was gathered from the Dwight Hall at Yale website: [https://dwighthall.org/yale-undergraduate-legal-aid-association-yulaa](https://dwighthall.org/yale-undergraduate-legal-aid-association-yulaa) and the YULAA website: [https://www.yulaa.org/about](https://www.yulaa.org/about)

⁴ This information was gathered from the OCS website: [https://ocs.yale.edu/career-resource/lawyers-without-borders](https://ocs.yale.edu/career-resource/lawyers-without-borders)

⁵ This information was gathered from the Yale Mock Trial website: [https://mocktrial.sites.yale.edu/](https://mocktrial.sites.yale.edu/)
- **Yale Journal of Medicine and Law:** An undergraduate publication centered around the link between medicine and law, specifically healthcare policy, bioethics, healthcare economics, biomedical research, and global health care. 

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6 This information was gathered from the Yale Law Journal website: [https://law.yale.edu/student-life/student-journals-and-publications/yjple](https://law.yale.edu/student-life/student-journals-and-publications/yjple)
Where to Find Opportunities

Jobs/Internships:

- **Yale Career Link, powered by Symplicity** (accessed through the "Career Link" tab on the OCS website) includes a job and internship search database where any Yale undergrad can find opportunities that align with their interests. Searching a keyword such as "law" and then utilizing the provided filter options can prove useful.

Fellowships:

- The **Yale Fellowships and Funding website** ([https://funding.yale.edu/](https://funding.yale.edu/)) is a great place to start looking for law-related fellowships. Press "Start Searching" to find several means to access fellowships; for external fellowships, underneath "Yale Student Grants Database," there is a link to find apply-through-Yale fellowships; under "CIPE Resources," all of the resources that the Yale Center for International and Professional Experience offers are consolidated and organized into a list.  

- The Yale **Center for International and Professional Experience ([https://cipe.yale.edu/](https://cipe.yale.edu/))** offers information and advice regarding U.S.-based and international opportunities. It is useful to make a CIPE account.  

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7 This information was gathered from the Yale Fellowships and Funding website: [https://funding.yale.edu/](https://funding.yale.edu/)
8 This information was gathered from the Yale Center for International and Professional Experience website: [https://cipe.yale.edu/](https://cipe.yale.edu/)
Study Resources

LSAT Prep: 

The Law School Admission Council has recently coordinated with Khan Academy to provide college undergraduates with a free LSAT prep program. Khan Academy Official LSAT Prep (https://www.khanacademy.org/prep/lsat) offers a means for students to create a customized prep plan including official LSAT exams.

Yale Legal Research Data:

The following databases are available to all Yale students:

- **LexisNexis Academic:**
  https://advance.lexis.com/sourcemenu/index?crid=26e66d8a-0ea9-4c8e-9965683e3094110e&amp;pdpermalink=97609ae18-d80c-483ca73a3f30e7eeb5fe&amp;pdmfid=1516831&amp;pdisurla=true

- **FastCase:** http://morris.law.yale.edu/record=e100255~S1


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9 The following information was gathered with the help of Yale Law Librarians and Brent Salter*
• Proquest Congressional: Proquest Legislative Insight: http://morris.law.yale.edu/record=e100224~S1
• Proquest Regulatory Insight: http://morris.law.yale.edu/record=e100404~S1
• Making of Modern Law (supreme Court cases and briefs): http://morris.law.yale.edu/record=e100096~S1
• Research guide: https://library.law.yale.edu/guides/research-guides

Yale Law Research Guide: https://library.law.yale.edu/guides/research-guides

Free or Cheap Legal Websites:
- Case Law
  • Official SCOTUS website: www.supremecourt.gov/ (dockets, briefs)
  • Google Scholar

- Statutory Law
  • FDsys: https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/home.action
  • Congress.gov: https://www.congress.gov/
Quick Advice

Preparing for Law School

Academics:

- Major: There is no set major that a pre-law student should have. Students should strive to receive an undergraduate education that enhances "writing, oral communication, reading, listening, researching, analytical, problem-solving, and critical reasoning"
- Classes: There are no set classes that a pre-law student should take but, as mentioned on the OCS Website: ¹⁰

  - The Pre-law Committee, ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar has provided the following examples:
  - Political Science courses provide a strong understanding of political thought and theory, and of the contemporary American political system.
  - Philosophy & Ethics courses provide an understanding of ethical theory and theories of justice.
  - Economics courses provide an understanding of the interaction between economic theory and public policy.
  - Math courses provide an important foundation in basic financial skills.

¹⁰ This information was gathered from the "Law School" page of the OCS website: https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/law-school
• Psychology and Sociology provide an understanding of human behavior and social interaction.

• African and African American studies, History, American studies, East Asian studies, Latin American Studies and East European studies offer an understanding of diverse cultures within and beyond the United States and of the increasing interdependence of the communities of our world." (https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/law-school)

**Testing**: 11:

- **LSAT**: The LSAT is a national standardized test administered by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and is required for acceptance into most American Bar Association-approved law schools.

- **GRE**: The GRE is a national standardized test administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and is acceptable in place of the LSAT for acceptance into some American Bar Association-approved law schools. For updates on which schools accept the GRE visit: https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/law/

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11 This information was gathered from the "Law School" page of the OCS website: https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/law-school
Applying to Law School

Law School Application Timeline: 12

The "Law School" tab on the OCS Website provides the following information on a suitable law school application timeline. Students should aim to apply the November the year before matriculation.

Two Years Prior to Matriculating (Junior Year)

September - December:
- Build relationships with faculty members who later may write you letters of recommendation.
- Consider attending the LSAC Law School Forum in either New York, Boston, or other available locations.

March
- Register to take an LSAT or GRE exam

June – August
- Begin drafting your personal statement and construct a resume to be included with your applications.
- Research law schools; prepare a list of places to which you will apply.

September – October
- Register with the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) and have your transcripts sent.

12 The following information was gathered AND QUOTED from the "Law School" page of the OCS website: https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/law-school
One Year Prior to Matriculating (Senior Year)

September:
- Discuss your school choices with an advisor.
- Write a personal statement and have a final draft reviewed by several readers.
- Obtain two academic and one professional letters of recommendation to be sent to CAS.

October:
- Take a fall LSAT entrance exam, if needed.
- Complete and begin submitting applications by late October into early November.

November:
- Submit your applications by late October - mid November.
- Begin investigating sources of financial aid (federal, institutional, private) and file aid applications early.

December:
- Check with the law schools to be sure that your files are complete.
- Obtain a Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
January:
• Have an updated transcript with your fall term grades sent directly to CAS.

February-April
• Evaluate offers of acceptance, deferrals, financial aid.
• Discuss your options with an advisor.

Application Checklist*:
• Essay
• Recommendation Letters (number needed varies by school)
• Transcripts
• Resume
• Dean's Certification (if required)
• Additional Essays and Optional Essays (depending on school)
• Addendum (factual statements about additional information for application)
• Entrance Exam
• Final Application

*The "Law School" page of the OCS website provides important additional information for all of these application requirements: https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/law-school
On Choosing Law School

Is Law the Right Choice?

What Do Lawyers Do? 13

- advocate
- legal research
- meet and correspond with clients
- reading and writing

What Else are Lawyers?

- adept readers and listeners
- analyzers
- information synthesizers
- advocates
- writers and public speakers
- negotiators
- counselors

Litigation (Trial Work) vs. Transactional Work:

- Litigators handle the "investigation, pleadings and discovery to pre-trial, trial, settlement and appeal" phases of a trial. Many cases take

13 The following information was gathered AND QUOTED from the "Law School" page of the OCS website: https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/law-school
place outside of the courtroom but litigation lawyers are likely to find themselves in the courtroom at some point or other

• Transactional lawyers work in between individuals and companies and work with contracts, documents (to start businesses), and closing documents (for large purchases), among other tasks. These lawyers handle a lot of research, review, and coordination.

Different Branches of Legal Work:*
• Private Practice
• Public
• Government
• Judicial Clerkships
• Business and Industry
• Academia

*The "Law School" Page of the OCS website provides a lot of helpful additional information about these types of legal work.
Choosing Between Schools

Students should consider the following when choosing between law schools: 14

- **Faculty Reputation:** Look for faculty academic and practical experience, student-to-faculty ratios, the diversity of the faculty, and the political reputation of the faculty.

- **Graduate Success:** How many graduates of a school pass the bar exam? This information can be found by contacting admissions officers or by searching school websites.

- **National vs. Regional Schools:** Either school is good for students who would like to find a job around the country, but regional schools are better for students who are likely to work in the area after graduation. National schools tend to have more of a national and international reputation.

- **School Facilities:** Look at the facilities each school offers and factor this into the decision.

- **Location:** Look at whether the school is part of a larger university, whether it is in a city, and whether it within an area where a student would consider working for a few years post-graduation.

- **Cost:** Law schools provide varying financial help. Students should consider which grants, scholarships, and loans they can apply to any school they consider.

- **Testing:** Some schools accept the GRE exam, but most law

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schools only accept the LSAT.

- **Clinical and Extracurricular Activities**
Overview

This guide provided a comprehensive look into all of the resources that prospective law school students at Yale College have access to. Keep in mind, these resources are evolving and improving, but this guide looks into what students can access as of today. A brief review of this guide is provided below:

Undergraduate Resources:
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