A Guide to Law School Admissions

By: Dr. Wendy Watson and James Nichols, ‘13
Contents

Introduction................................................................................................................1

Balance Law School Expectations

The Tier System

GPA and LSAT Goal

The LSAT..................................................................................................................2

The Basics

Question Types

The Grading System

Studying for the LSAT

When to Take the LSAT

What if Something Goes Wrong?

Pre-application..........................................................................................................6

See Your Pre-Law Advisor

LSAC Credential Assembly Service Application Timeframe

Fee Waivers

Deciding Where to Apply

Useful Websites

The Application Process..........................................................................................9

Personal Statement

Resume

Addenda

Diversity Statement
Letters of Recommendation
What to Do With All This Stuff
Personalization

The Waiting Game
How Long Will I Wait?
Status Checker, Emails, and Phone Contact
Outcomes
Acceptances
Waitlist
Rejections
End of Cycle
Admitted Students Weekend
Research, Research, and More Research (Financing Law School)
To Retake, or Not to Retake

Calendar for Applying to Law School
Application Checklist
Introduction

Balancing Expectations

Not all law degrees are created equal. Getting a law degree is not a guarantee that you will get a job as a lawyer; however, you cannot be a lawyer without attending law school. If your goal is to practice in Texas, it may be wise for you to attend a Texas school. If you want to get a big firm job, you’ll want to attend the highest rank school you can afford. Before entertaining the idea of law school, you should research your options, balancing the type of legal practice you want to have with issues of cost, location, and prestige. This guide is meant to aid students in the law school application process. Please note this guide was last updated in spring of 2018.

The Tier System

Law schools are ranked on many factors such as median LSAT, median GPA, student/professor ratio, job placement, and availability of clinics (programs focusing on a particular type of law that give students real-world experience). Schools ranked from 1-50 are considered tier 1, 50-100 are tier 2, and the rest are competing for tier 3 and 4 status, but their students’ prospects are similar. A school’s rank is generally a good indicator of the educational opportunities provided and potential job prospects for the school’s graduates; however, an assertive and innovative student can create job opportunities for themselves at a lower-ranked school, and a lackluster student from a prestigious school may have struggle to find a job. You should identify your target tier when you get a sense of your GPA and LSAT prospects, but you also need to think about your ability to thrive and your willingness to commit to the law school process.

GPA and LSAT Goal

All schools have a breakdown on their entering class profile which can be found on their website. These detail the new class’s median GPA and median LSAT scores. By definition, half of the class is above the median and half of the class is below the median. Schools also supply the cut point for the lowest 25% and highest 75% for the LSAT and GPA. These scores help ‘splitters’ to determine whether a school is within their reach. Splitters are applicants who have high GPAs but low LSAT scores (or vice versa). Look up your dream law school and identify that school’s median scores to set goals for yourself. Remember, though, that higher is always better!
The LSAT

The Basics

The LSAT is short for Law School Admissions Test. The LSAT is a 100-101 question test broken down into six sections. There are two logical reasoning sections, one analytical reasoning section, one reading comprehension section, one experimental section, and an essay. Each section is limited to 35 minutes, with a single break between sections three and four. The essay will be administered last, but the first five sections will be given in a random order. The LSAT is administered six times a year: September, November, January, March, June, and July. Official registration can be done through the LSAC (Law School Admissions Council) website and will cost around $180. It is important to note that the LSAT requires no prior knowledge but simply tests one’s reasoning skills on a multitude of levels; that said, it is often useful to prepare for. Each question on the LSAT has one correct answer and four incorrect answers.

WEBSITE: LSAC.org

Question Types

Logical Reasoning: This type of question will account for around 50% of your grade. Questions of this type will give you a stimulus (a short paragraph) a couple sentences in length and ask a question about the stimulus that will test your ability to identify conclusions, locate fallacies, make sound deductions, and notice weak points. The LSAT contains two logical reasoning sections with 24-26 questions in each section.

Analytical Reasoning: This section contains four “logic games.” Each game provides a set of conditions that must be met, and the individual questions ask the test taker to draw conclusions about specific scenarios while abiding by the conditions. This section has between 22-24 questions. While it is often considered the hardest section, it is also considered the easiest to learn. Many prep-courses and books highlight diagraming strategies to help one conquer the logic games in the analytical reasoning section.

Reading Comprehension: This section can best be described as a collegiate version of any reading comprehension test you took in high school. This section will contain four passages which can literally cover any type of topic from micro-organisms to turnip sales in mid-century Europe. Questions focus on the author’s standpoint, main point, and factual statements found in the passage. This section has between 26-28 questions. Most students do not study/prepare for
this section as much as the others due to familiarity, the belief that this will be easy. However, it is more challenging than prior reading comprehension tests you will have taken.

*Experimental Section*: This section will take the form of a logical reasoning, reading comprehension, or logic games. This section is ungraded but can come in any order, making it near impossible to determine which section is the experimental one. Try your hardest on every section.

*Essay*: This section is also ungraded, but a copy of what you write will be sent to every law school to which you apply. The prompt sets forth two alternatives and the pros and cons related to each. You will be asked to choose one side and defend the choice. There are no “right” answers, only answers that are organized and supported better. Even though this portion is ungraded, you should do your best on it. Law schools will frown upon flip responses, cartoons, or blank pages.

**The Grading System**

There is no penalty for answering a question incorrectly, so do not leave any question blank. The LSAT is graded on three levels: raw score, scaled score, and percentile score. The raw score is simply the number of questions you answered correctly. The scaled score is the number law schools will see. The scaled score compares the difficulty of the specific test given with past tests to arrive at a score between 120 and 180. For example, if the November exam is “harder” than the July exam, the same raw score may translate into a 150 in November and a 149 in July. As a result, even if there are minor variations in the apparent difficulty of two exams, there will be no penalty in taking one or the other. That said, there is so little variation in the difficulty of exams, the conversion from raw to scaled score is pretty consistent across exam administrations. Finally, your percentile score compares your scaled score to the scaled scores of everyone who has taken the LSAT for the past three years. A percentile score of 75% means that 75% of test takers did worse than you did. The graph on the next page illustrates how raw scores, scaled scores, and percentiles interact.
Studying for the LSAT

LSAT scores and GPAs are the most important factors in law school admissions. As a result, a number of test preparation services now offer students tips and tricks for maximizing their LSAT success. Such courses include BluePrint, TestMasters/ScorePerfect, PowerScore, Kaplan, Princeton Review, 7Sage and several others. Each course has its own teaching philosophy and techniques. There is no one universal best program to choose. However, once you start with a method, it is wise to stick with a single program, because if you’re learning two techniques at the same time, you’re likely to do little more than confuse yourself.

Classes are expensive, so start saving now!

A student interested in a prep course should research each company carefully. Consider whether you need an online course, an in-person course, or even one-on-one tutoring. Most prep course providers offer a range of course formats at various price points. If you are a self-starter you can manage an online course, but if you need more accountability you might require an in-person class. You might want a program that is intense but only ten weeks or you might want a “low and slow” program that is spread out over more than a year. You should also investigate the promises and guarantees each course offers. Some programs guarantee that you will do better on the actual test than you did on the first practice test of the course, for example.

If you choose not to do a prep course it is highly recommended to study on your own time. You can purchase study aids books at most bookstores. You can purchase books that each include ten
actual old LSATs from Amazon (at under $25 per book). The UNT library also has some study aids on reserve, and the Office of Pre-Law Advising administers practice LSATs every semester. This office recommends you give yourself at least 6 months to prepare, starting slowly and building up

**When to Take the LSAT**

First and foremost, do not take the test until you are ready. Many students are tempted to take the test once just to see how it goes (a sort of “trial run”). That is a VERY bad idea. While most law schools only consider your highest score, some still take an average of your scores, and they will all see your entire LSAT record. If you have to take it more than once, so be it. But don’t increase the odds of that happening by taking the exam without preparation.

Otherwise, think about when you want to apply. Ideally, you want to send in your applications no later than December or January of your senior year, and that means a “final” LSAT opportunity of November of your senior year. There’s some wiggle room, though. You might want to take the test earlier, so you have time to retake if things go poorly (if so, give yourself enough time to actually fix any problems, so do your first run in June or July). Or, in the alternative, you might want to plan to drop your applications later, which gives you the freedom to wait until the January test date.

Ideally, you only want to take the test once, so get it right the first time!

You will receive the results of your LSAT attempt about three weeks after the date of administration.

**What if Something Goes Wrong?**

Don’t panic. If you come out of the test knowing it went poorly (you were sick, or you fell asleep during the exam, or the person next to you ground his teeth all the way through the test) you can cancel your score. You must do so right away, as you have a very short window of time in which to do so.

If you cancel your score or if the score you receive is not indicative of your ability, you can take the test again. This is why taking the exam for the first time in the January before you plan to start school is a scary; if you have to retake the test, you have to wait until the end of March which means mid-April scores and the likelihood of missing most of your application deadlines.

If you take the exam and feel like things went well, but you don’t get the score you were expecting, you have to decide whether a retake is worth the expense. Unless there was some reason why that first score might be lower than expected, the chances are good that you won’t do
much better on a retest. A lot of people simply have a “natural limit” on their LSAT performance; it’s not an indication of how intelligent they are, but an indication of how well they can do on that particular test. That said, most schools look at your highest score, so there is no real risk in taking it again. Just don’t expect to do the exact same thing (study the same way, etc.) and achieve a different result. If you’re going to retake the LSAT, try something different: consider a course, study with other people, take more practice tests, etc.
Pre-application: What You Can Do Early

See Your Pre-Law Advisor

Your pre-law advisor is Dr. Wendy Watson. Her office is 153 Wooten Hall, and you can reach her at wendy.watson@unt.edu. Dr. Watson is here to answer your questions about law school, the life of a lawyer, and the application process. She can assist you in developing a winning personal statement, position yourself to have a strong application, and review your materials before you submit them. Please see Dr. Watson once a year during your first two years of college and at least once a semester for the two years prior to attending law school. You can schedule an appointment at class.unt.edu/advising/pre-law. While you are there, sign up to receive e-mail announcements about law-related events (including practice LSATs) and internship opportunities.

LSAC Credential Assembly Service

Other than taking the LSAT, there are a number of tasks for you to complete before you actually start submitting applications. First, create a “Credential Assembly Service” (CAS) account on the LSAC website. All supplemental materials (references, transcripts, etc.) must be submitted through LSAC, and you’ll likely submit all applications through that portal as well. CAS requires a verification process to validate application materials which will cost around $185 (note that this is in addition to the fee to take the LSAT). Students should have a CAS account no later than mid-September as this is when law school applications will become available through the CAS accounts. You can, however, set up your CAS earlier and begin, for example, getting letters of recommendation and personal statements sent to the CAS right away.

Your pre-law advisor can give you advice about the order and ideal times to complete these steps and others. You may also refer to the calendars and checklists at the end of this guide. Be sure to visit your advisor every semester from at least the fall of your junior year until your applications are done.

Fee Waivers

Applying for law school is not free. Each application consists of a CAS verification fee ($35) and an application fee levied by the law school. In law school application can cost upwards of
$100. However, students can get need- or merit-based fee waivers; many law schools are waiving these fees entirely. You can get a merit-based fee waiver in two ways. The first way is to release both the LSAT score and GPA noted on your LSAC profile. This will allow schools to email and mail fee waivers to students they want to apply. The second way is to directly contact the school and request a fee waiver; currently, most schools are providing waivers without requiring any demonstration of need. In other words, if you want to apply, call the school and they will likely provide you with a waiver.

Other fee waivers may be sent to your pre-law advisor. If you are looking for a waiver to a specific school, watch for announcements.

**Deciding Where to Apply**

Once you have your LSAT score you must make the difficult choice of where to apply. Thankfully, it is relatively easy to determine one’s chances at various law schools. There are a number of websites that estimate your chance of being accepted to each law school. You should not rely entirely on these sites, but they can be a useful indicator of which schools (or types of schools) are most likely to offer you a seat in their class. One such program can be found on the LSAC website, and it is the most reliable. Remember, though, that your credentials may be very high yet you don’t get into a school you considered “safe, or very low yet you do get into a school that seemed out of reach. This is why it is important to apply to multiple law schools. Specifically, look for a few where you are the typical student, a few where you will be the big fish in the pond, and then don’t forget to dream big … where would you go if you could go anywhere at all?

Do your research. Aside from finding the law schools that might accept you, you also need to find the law schools you want to attend. Look at sources such as Pre-Law Magazine and law school websites about schools that are most appropriate for the type of specialty you wish to practice (though keep in mind that most law students do not end up practicing the type of law they expect to practice when they start). Lawschooltransparency.com is particularly helpful in presenting the required ABA disclosures about job placement in a clear and understandable way (dig in a little, though, and don not just look at their “employment score”; that is created using an algorithm that is a little tricky to understand).

When you are deciding where to apply, think about the particular programs schools offer, their geographic location, and their price. Talk to law schools or your pre-law advisor about loan forgiveness programs and programs that pin your repayment amount to your income. Pay special attention to the job placement rates and bar passage rates of the schools you are considering. You don’t want to by $50,000 per year in tuition and be unable to get a job!
It is useful to use a spreadsheet. Start with a list of all accredited law schools (do NOT apply to a school that is not accredited by the ABA). Strike every school that is geographically unacceptable. Next, start identifying factors such as cost of attendance (not just tuition, but cost of attendance: schools will report this on their websites and the cost includes cost of living and incidentals such as books and insurance), employment rates, and bar passage rates. Add information about median LSAT and GPA so you can figure out your chances of admission. Finally, add a column for things like special clinics that might attract you. This will allow you to strike more schools and rank the rest.

**Useful Websites**

This is the age of the Internet and as such the number of law school related websites is exploding. While many of these websites lack substantial credibility or useful information there are a number of sites that can be invaluable.

http://www.top-law-schools.com/: This website may very well contain all the information and links to information a hopeful law student could ever want. This website has school rankings, school profiles, interviews of deans, and also the blog. The blog has threads which talk about every law school, admitted students day, financial aid, and everything else law school related. Law school employees, even deans, have been known to read and even post on this blog. Do not underestimate the information that can be found on this website.

http://lawschoolnumbers.com/: This website also contains law school rankings and profiles. It also is a website that keeps track of profiles which reveal acceptances, rejections, and waitlists. These profiles are self-reported but can be verified for authenticity by the website. These profiles also often tell about scholarship offers and the time they received a response. This website will help in gauging chances of acceptance as well as help applicants form a general idea of potential merit scholarships. It should be noted that even with the verification process, these profiles are self-reported and accuracy is not guaranteed.

http://howicompare.com/: Much like “Law School Numbers,” this site is dedicated to helping students identify their prospects at specific law schools.

http://www.lawschooltransparency.com/: This website is a great reality check. If one is having doubts about a legal career or believes they have an overly romanticized idea of a legal career then they should read articles and review profiles on this website. This website also has up-to-date NALP and ABA reports which have a schools employment breakdown including salaries, employee type, and employment location. This is a good website for determining whether a particular law school is worth the tuition, though you should be aware that the website is fairly harsh. As with all web-based information, you should take their advice with a grain of salt.
Your pre-law advisor: Okay, she’s not a website. But she IS one of your best resources in this fight. Use her to help figure out which factors should rank more highly in your decision of which law school to choose.

The Application Process

In the end, your application will consist of the following components:

(1) your LSAT score
(2) your transcripts (from every college or university you have attended)
(3) your personal statement
(4) your resume
(5) any addenda or diversity statement you need to file
(6) your letters of reference and/or evaluations (depending on the law school)
(7) the school-specific application

Personal Statement

This is your one chance to be heard by the admissions committee. This part of the application goes beyond numbers and resumes, so be sure to make it memorable. Think of spending three minutes in an elevator with the head of the admissions committee; what would you want to tell that person about yourself?

Length: Each school has a different maximum length, usually varying between two and four double spaced pages. It is to your benefit to use the full amount of space available. It is not unusual for applicants to create a standard two page statement for most schools and to tailor a personal statement for certain schools.

Topics: Topics are usually not assigned and applicants are often given free rein in this respect. Schools sometimes indicate points they wish an applicant to highlight (why law school, why this law school, future career plans, etc.). However, it is up to the applicant how to approach these questions if they are asked. Be careful not to rehash your resume in your personal statement. Let the law school see the real you, the characteristic or experience that makes you unique and someone they want in their class.
Review Companies: Much like LSAT prep-courses, there are companies to aid in creating a personal statement. These companies will help in the creation of a topic, developing of ideas, and proofing for grammar. Note that your pre-law advisor provides similar services FOR FREE. Be careful that the review company does not simply write a personal statement for you (law schools can spot that a mile away) and don’t let them squelch your own passion or voice. Whether or not you use a review company, an applicant should have someone proofread their personal statement. This would be a fantastic time to work with whoever is writing your letter of recommendation, work with the UNT writing center, or visit the UNT prelaw advisor (who is always happy to brainstorm and edit with you).

Resume

A resume is required with every application. A resume should highlight academic achievements, work experience, extracurricular activities, and awards. It is generally considered unnecessary to include anything prior to one’s undergraduate career in a resume unless it has substantial bearing on your legal goals. Professional resume formatting is recommended; that means limiting yourself to a single page. Do not include pictures, colors, or fancy fonts. You should also eliminate an “objective” (your objective is to go to law school, and they know that) and a list of skills such as “interpersonal skills” (because those are unsubstantiated). Proofread carefully.

Addenda

Every law school application has a spot for an optional addendum. An addendum is a simple statement you can use to explain any problems with your application. This is where you can highlight a rising grade trend, explain a difference in LSAT scores if you experienced a substantial increase on a retake, or if any other part of the application needs explanation beyond what is provided in the resume and personal statement. You will also be required to file an addendum to explain any criminal history, school conduct violations, or issues of academic integrity. Disclose these matters fully. Law schools will run background checks and will rescind admission if you lied. Moreover, you can get all the way through law school and have the board of bar examiners find your previous misconduct: at that point, you will be forbidden from taking the bar and may even have your diploma rescinded. When it comes to conduct and law school apps, the cover up is always worse than the original misconduct.

Diversity Statement

Some law school applications also have a place to complete an optional diversity statement. This is the chance to inform the admissions council how you may enhance diversity at the school. This could include race, religion, sexual preference, first generation status, or veteran status. It may even include that you come from thirteen generations of left-handed fiddle players (okay, maybe not, but you get the idea). Do not feel obligated to fill out this section. Leaving it blank
will not hurt your chances of admission. Do not provide this information if the law school does not provide an opportunity; some schools (especially state schools) are legally forbidden from considering this data.

Letters of Recommendations

Each law school requires letters of recommendation. The number of letters required fluctuates depending on the school. The typical number required is two, but you might want to aim for three. Letters should come from credible sources who know you well in a professional and/or academic setting. At least one of your references should be academic. You should set up an appointment with each reviewer. Bring your resume and, if possible, a draft of your personal statement. Talk to your reviewer about your particular strengths and how they were demonstrated in your interactions with the reviewer. Don’t be bashful about asking whether the reviewer can write you a positive letter. Be sure to give the person from whom you are requesting a letter ample time to write the letter. The LSAC website details how letters are to be submitted. Ask your references for their assistance in early- to mid-September.

What to Do With All This Stuff

As noted above, when you create your account with LSAC you will also sign up for their Credential Assembly Service (CAS). This essentially creates a virtual filing cabinet for you. You will have your undergraduate institutions send official transcripts to LSAC, and they will upload them into your CAS file. Similarly, your recommenders will send their letters straight to LSAC for uploading into your CAS file (you never touch or see them). You will be able to upload your resume, personal statement, and addenda to your CAS file.

When it comes time to apply, you will go into your CAS account and there you will find a drop-down menu that contains the name of nearly every law school in the country. Click on the name of the school you are applying to, and that school’s application will pop up. Complete the application and attach the appropriate documents from your CAS file. Hit submit, and you’re done!

A Note about Early Action and Early Decision

These two things sound like the same thing but they are not. What is the difference? Early action simply means that the applicant applies early and the school acts on the application early (usually be the end of the calendar year). It’s that simple. With respect to early decision, the applicant applies early and the school acts on the application early BUT the applicant also
(typically) agrees to be bound by the decision. In other words, if Mary applies to Franklesmat Law School early decision she would (a) have to temporarily withdraw her applications from other schools and (b) if Franklesmat makes her an offer she MUST take it. Must. Even if another school might have offered her a full ride scholarship.

The advantage to both approaches is that you get an answer earlier in the process and you get your name before the committee while the class is basically empty. With ED, it also is a signal that you are deeply committed, and for students who are right on the edge in terms of qualifications, that might be a good thing. But there are risks involved, and students should consider them before acting.

Outcomes

Acceptances

Congratulations! Whether you just got accepted to your dream school or to one of your safety schools, you should celebrate. No matter what, you now have options. Before going too crazy though, there are a few things you should do.

**Rank the Offer:** Do your math. A partial-tuition scholarship in Iowa may be a better deal than a full-tuition scholarship to a school in San Francisco. When you are adding up the cost per year of the school, include tuition, books, housing, food, etc., and remember that costs of living vary dramatically from city to city. Don’t make assumptions. Recently, I compared the cost of attendance of a small private law school in Alabama to a public law school in Texas and found out that the Alabama school actually cost less.

**Negotiation:** Be cautious in negotiating. You want to avoid seeming arrogant in negotiating a scholarship offer. However, if you have a strong scholarship from one school and would really rather go to another, it may be worth it to roll the dice. Simple present the information, tell the school with the lower offer that you have a strong preference for attending their institution, and ask if there is a way to increase the offer. If they do—if they give you what you ask for—you better accept with them. If you use their acceptance as leverage for yet another offer, you will get a bad reputation; law schools talk to one another.

**Withdraw & Save:** Once you decide that a particular school is no longer on your list, be sure to withdraw from the university. This will open the spot for other applicants. At this point begin to save money for gas, tickets, and hotels to visit law schools that are still in the running.
Waitlist

This is honestly the hardest response to get. In a sense, this is a law school basically saying ‘maybe’. Much like being a safety prom date, it hurts, but there are a number of ways to increase the odds of turning a maybe into a steadfast yes. If you are unwilling to wait until summer (sometimes very late summer) and go to the school without a scholarship, then you should simply decline the waitlist offer. Talk to your pre-law advisor before you decline any school.

Letter of Continued Interest: A letter of continued interest, also known as LOCI, is the first step from waitlist to “yes.” This is an email informing law school X that you wish not only to stay on the waitlist but that you would undoubtedly attend law school X if admitted. The best LOCIs are a couple of paragraphs and are tailored to the school. Admissions committees are busy but will notice when a letter has been carefully crafted. This letter will be added to your file and admissions committees may remember that letter if a school has to dip into its waitlist.

Updates: If you have just graduated, be sure to send an updated transcript to LSAC showing your grades from you last semester. Inform the school that waitlisted you that an updated transcript is now available. If you have had any sort of major work promotion or award be sure to inform the law school of this. Be sure not to send more than one update a month, however, because you don’t want to be a pest.

Visit: If you have the means and have not already done so, you might consider scheduling a school visit. Make sure you schedule the visit in advance and be respectful while you are there. Do not expect to meet with the admissions committee. Your visit will simply signal your interest.

Seat Deposits: Each school requires an initial seat deposit (usually in April). This deposit is not binding; in other words, you are not contractually obligated to attend that school in the fall. It is common to put down multiple seat deposits if you are still unsure about which school to attend. Keep in mind, however, that seat deposits are NONREFUNDABLE. If you are waitlisted at the school of your dreams, make sure you pay the seat deposit at a close runner up so you have a place to go in August.

Rejections

Rejections will happen. Do not let them get you down. There a huge number of factors that go into application decisions, and a rejection from any school is not an indication that you can’t or won’t be a great lawyer someday.
End of Cycle

Admitted Students Weekend

All law schools have admitted students weekends or preview days. These events are designed to immerse prospective students in that law school’s environment. These events include tours, classroom visits, lecture events, and luncheons with professors. These events will help you determine if you will fit in at that particular law school. On top of that, they give you the chance to begin networking early. This can lead to finding potential roommates, meeting deans, and getting information about how to get into the good clinics early. Most of these events take place in March and April so be careful not to double book visits. If you are unable to attend a preview weekend but are seriously considering the school, individual tours can be arranged by contacting the admissions office. While these events are free, the cost of hotels and travel can add up. Fortunately, some schools offer travel stipends. If a school does not provide any information on travel stipends do not be afraid to email the admissions office and ask. Much like negotiating, the worst that can happen is they say no. Be sure to reserve hotels in advance as the hotels tend to get booked relatively quickly around the bigger law schools or in the smaller towns.

Research, Research, and More Research

Deciding which school to attend is no easy task. The only thing that will make it easier is having the facts. Once you know the employment statistics and the cost of attendance a few choices will emerge as the most viable.

Financing Law School: Schools can offer a lot of money, but it should be looked at in context. A $90,000 scholarship to a school in D.C. may not be worth as much as a $40,000 scholarship to Texas Tech. One should examine the cost of living, tuition, and employment statistics. On top of that, many scholarships have stipulations. These stipulations require scholarship recipients to maintain a certain GPA or lose the scholarship. You may try to negotiate the terms of your scholarship, but that is a challenge. You should definitely ask what percentage of past scholarship students have been able to maintain their scholarships. Also, ask if there is additional scholarship money for which you might be eligible in your second and third years.

Do not go to a school simply because of a scholarship or neglect a school because they did not offer you one. Remember that this is an investment in your future and yourself. There are now a wide variety of ways to finance a legal education. Talk to the financial aid offices at the law schools to which you are accepted about loans with repayments pegged to your income and about loan forgiveness opportunities.
To Retake, or Not to Retake

At the end of the day you may not have gotten into the school you wanted or your scholarship offers were well below expectations. Either way, there is no shame in retaking the LSAT and reapplying. The average age for law students is around 24 and many have years of work experience (in fact, some schools prefer more “seasoned” applicants). There is nothing wrong with retaking the LSAT, working to save up money, and reapplying.

That said, don’t retake the LSAT unless you have reason to believe your score will improve by more than a few points. A small bump won’t dramatically increase your odds of getting in when you reapply, and you risk actually making a lower score the second time around. Remember that law schools see all of your LSAT scores, and some schools take the average of your scores for purposes of admissions decisions.
Calendar for Applying to Law School

- **Freshmen & Sophomore year**
  - take one or two law related courses to determine whether you enjoy law & the judicial process
  - take career assessment tests at UNT Career Center (careercenter.unt.edu)
  - examine work & career options for law school grads
  - pursue academic career according to the major of your choice
  - get involved with pre-law activities (Phi Alpha Delta, National Black Law Students Association, Moot Court Team) or other extracurricular activities that will help distinguish your application from everyone else

- **24 months prior**
  - begin researching law schools
  - take upper division law-related courses in areas of interest
  - discuss law school and being an attorney with those working in law-related professions, pre-law advisors, family, and friends
  - begin saving for admissions process (application fees, travel to visit potential schools, taking review courses)
  - do experiential activities for final assessment about whether law school is for you (internships, study abroad, work with a mentor, attend pre-law functions)
  - sit in on a law school class at a university near where you live
  - make final assessments about whether you want to attend law school
  - decide how you will prepare for the LSAT and how you will finance that preparation

- **18 months prior**
  - take LSAT diagnostic exams offered by test prep companies or by pre-law advising office
  - begin to contact potential references for application-find out what requirements and materials they need for completing reference
  - schedule appointment with pre-law advisor
  - consult Law School Admissions Council website (www.lsac.org) to determine deadlines
  - register for the Credential Assembly Service and the LSAT (based on anticipated test date)
  - identify all law schools you will be applying to for admission & determine how much financial aid will be necessary for your schools of choice
  - rank schools according to your preferences and financial capabilities
  - brainstorm personal statement with pre-law advisor
15 months prior
- make a calendar of deadlines for application process
- take the LSAT (possibly)
- begin draft of personal statement
- submit personal statement to pre-law advisor and have friends/family/writing center edit for content & grammar
- submit reference information to CAS
- give materials to persons who are writing letters of reference (include resume, unofficial transcripts, draft of personal statement, writing sample – as requested by reference)

12 months prior
- take the LSAT if you have not already done so
- finalize personal statement
- begin completing application forms
- obtain all necessary transcripts from all college or university courses you have taken and submit to CAS
- file all financial aid applications forms
- write addenda
- polish resume

9 months prior
- verify that references have submitted letters of recommendation
- submit all materials to law school (between November 1 and February 1)

6 months prior
- begin making plans regarding your “move” to the next location (contact movers, find out information about housing availability at university you hope to attend)
- begin watching mail for acceptances or wait list notices
- contact financial aid offices to determine what financial aid programs you may be eligible for and how to begin applying for federal financial aid

3 months prior
- finalize plans for which law school you will attend
- send in deposit to hold space in school of your choice
- make living arrangements in new area where you will be attending law school
- drop us a note to tell us where you will be going