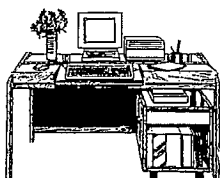


MAPLA

“Briefs”

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT



Dear MAPLA Members,

The 2000 National Conference for Pre-Law Advisors is scheduled for November 16 through 18 in San Diego, California. I want to encourage all MAPLA pre-law advisors to attend this event!!!! Each one of the past two national conferences has offered unique programs, interesting keynote speakers, and opportunities to interact with fellow pre-law advisors from all over the country. All conferences, both regional and national, have their own personalities. The last MAPLA conference in Chicago was very informative, hopefully entertaining, and provided a chance for everyone to make new acquaintances on a local level. The national conference, which occurs every four years, provides a way to expand and grow. It's a valuable experience to meet other pre-law advisors and see what kinds of programs work for them at their institutions. It's a valuable experience to listen to the comments and concerns from others in the same field. It's a valuable experience to hear the latest information from the Law School Admissions Council. It's a valuable experience to attend panels and sessions composed of people from the other APLAS. I hope all of you will be able to send back your registration form saying “Yes” you will be there. It's too valuable an experience to miss. For the latest conference program information be sure to check out the PLANC web page at planc.org.

See y'all out West!!!!

Gretchen



INSIDE...

- **Selecting an undergraduate major**
- **Mock Trial Competitions**
- **Creating a Prelaw Webpage**
- **In memoriam**

Selecting an Undergraduate Major

by Carol Leach

“I've decided to become a lawyer. So . . . I have to major in political science—right?”

“I haven't taken any law courses as an undergrad, so I'll never get into law school.”

“I only want to take classes that will help me in law school, so I'm majoring in criminal justice.”

Many of us hear comments like this on a daily basis (at least I HOPE I'm not the only one!) Although we repeat the prescribed mantras (law schools accept students from many majors, they look at the difficulty of the courses, major in something you ENJOY, etc.) disbelievers abound. And, unfortunately, there are plenty of people who are willing to take advantage of the naiveté of their students who WANT someone to tell them the exact formula for success in law school acceptance. I even catch myself doing it, especially when a particularly bright student is wavering about whether or not to major in political science. Some professors promise in their syllabi that their course is THE MOST IMPORTANT course students can take to prepare them for law school. And students are willing to believe it. Others lure students in with the promise that their course will be

better than others because they are "real" lawyers and can prepare students for law school better than college professors who "only" have Ph.Ds .

With all this information bombarding them, is it any wonder that students become confused? Although I keep trying to get the word out, there are still those students who will take ANY lawyer's advice about the LSAT or selecting a major over mine, no matter what. And this advice is frequently wrong. I've had students who've finished their Masters degree in English come to me with plans to enroll for a second degree in "pre-law" so they can go to law school. Although it would be ideal if each student carefully researched the field, read "getting into law school" books, and talked to law school representatives BEFORE committing to a particular course of study, it's just not going to happen. So I decided to show them the statistics on admission by major and let them come to their own conclusions.

The table below is based on data obtained from Law Services on the admission and enrollment rates of various majors in law school. Although the table does not list EVERY major (I believe there were more than 200 majors listed), it shows the most common majors that applied to law school in 1998 and their acceptance rates. With the table, I can point out that, yes, political science IS the most common major, but in 1998, 81 percent of applicants WEREN'T political science majors. And that, yes, criminal justice majors DO get into law school, but it's nowhere near the most common of majors. And that if they really want to make SURE they get into law school, physics has the highest acceptance rate. That usually scares them enough to get my point.

As I tell my students, read the table and draw your own conclusions.

(Fall 1998) Application and Acceptance rates for selected majors in Accredited Law Schools

Major	# of total applicants	% of total applicants	# of total applicants admitted to at least one law school	% of total applicants admitted to at least one law school	# enrolled Fall, 1998	% enrolled Fall, 1998
Political Science	13,431	18.57%	9,813	73.01%	8,393	62.49%
History	5,178	7.16%	4,087	78.93%	3,431	66.26%
English	5,017	6.94%	3,861	76.96%	3,252	64.82%
Psychology	3,828	5.59%	2,802	73.20%	2,338	61.10%
Criminal Justice	3,231	4.47%	1,819	56.29%	1,524	47.17%
Economics	2,610	3.06%	2,037	78.05%	1,660	63.60%
Accounting	2,124	2.94%	1,518	71.47%	1,223	57.58%
Sociology	1,918	2.65%	1,271	67.27%	1,064	55.47%
Business Admin.	1,799	2.49%	1,018	56.59%	828	46.02%
Finance	1,667	2.30%	1,185	71.09%	973	58.37%
General Biology	1,164	1.61%	875	75.17%	712	61.68%
Business Mgt.	1,103	1.52%	667	60.47%	548	49.79%
Marketing	967	1.37%	619	64.01%	503	52.02%
Biology, spec.	513	.71%	442	82.26%	340	66.28%
Environmental Sci.	456	.63%	375	82.24%	295	64.69%
Chemistry	453	.61%	343	75.72%	280	61.81%
Mathematics	328	.45%	251	76.52%	191	58.23%
Computer Science	307	.42%	192	62.54%	133	43.32%
Physics	115	.16%	101	87.83%	70	60.87%
Other	26,131	36.12%	17,147	65.63%	13,201	50.52%
TOTAL	72,340	100.00%	50,403	69.68%	41,568	57.46%

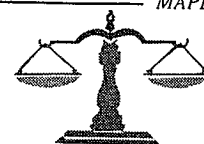
*Based on information obtained from the Law School Admission Council for the 1998 entering class. Table compiled by Carol A. Leach
 •Highest admissions rates (>than 70%): Physics, Biology Specialties, Environmental Science, History, Economics, English, General Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry, Psychology, Political Science, Finance
 •Lowest admissions rates (<60%): Criminal Justice, Business administration
 •Dr. Carol Leach is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Chicago State University and Coordinating Prelaw Advisor.



The Value of Undergraduate Mock Trial Competitions

by Don Racheter

MAPLA



Students who are considering a career in the law should take advantage of every possible opportunity to “test out” their interest — such as shadowing, internships, sitting in on court cases, and participating in mock trial. For a number of years mock trial has been available as an activity at the high school and junior high school level, and since 1985 it has been available at the collegiate level as well through the efforts of the American Mock Trial Association (www.collegemocktrial.org).

Participating in AMTA competitions will help students learn about the American legal system and trial advocacy in particular. Many students who graduate from law school have “tried” only one or two cases in law school. Students who do four years of collegiate mock trial in a moderately active program will have close to 100 trials under their belts. Authors such as Ball state that it takes a minimum of twenty trials to achieve minimal proficiency, so doing mock trial will definitely help the fledgling lawyer.

Additionally, in doing mock trial the student will learn/sharpen such skills as problem analysis, seeing more than one side to a situation, working as a member of a team, speaking persuasively, and thinking on one’s feet. These skills will stand them in good stead in a career in the law whether they become a trial attorney or not (or even if they decide not to go on to law school at all). Thus the time is well invested in a busy undergraduate career.

A large part of the value in doing mock trial comes from the interaction of the student with the Educator Coach(s) and Attorney Coach(s). AMTA rules require that a program have such adult supervision of the activity or a waiver from the school’s administration. Even better are the schools that give academic credit to the student for the substantial investment of time participating in AMTA-sanctioned mock trial entails.

What value is starting such a program to the MAPLA

member? It helps recruitment of top-quality prelaw students. High school mock trial is a vigorous and growing activity. Students who have participated want to attend a college where they can continue to compete rather than “waste” four years waiting for law school. I know of a personal example where a student came to Central College in Iowa from her home state of Arizona because of our Mock Trial Program and the lack of such programs in her home state.



If Advisors are interested, AMTA has a board of volunteers who will give advice, arrange scrimmages, etc. to help new programs. We have development directors in the four quarters of the nation specifically designated to assist. We even have a reduced “new program” registration fee.

Contact our headquarters in Des Moines to register and get started, or contact the undersigned for more information at 515-628-5259 or RacheterD@Central.Edu.

One area of concern the Newsletter Editor specifically asked me to address was mock trial versus finals pressures. The evolution of the mock trial calendar has obviated most of this problem. In the fall semester, the last Invitational tournaments are over before finals start. I for one, suspend mock trial classes a couple of weeks before the students are pressured by term papers and finals in other classes (I do not use a final in calculating my course grades). In the spring semester, the National Tournaments are over by the middle of April, so again a suspension well before other demands intensify works to the students’ advantage.

A few final suggestions for new programs. First, take lots of pictures during the season. A nice color photo of the whole team in their competition best makes a nice addition to a permanent trophy case. In addition to keeping any team trophies the students might win there, I make duplicates with the student’s name

inscribed for any individual awards they may win so that in 20 years when they bring their kids back to visit, they can point with pride to the role they played in your mock trial program. We also have an "awards banquet/meaningful final experience" at the end of each semester and give internal awards such as best witness/attorney over the season, best witness/attorney individual performance, most improved, most valuable player, etc., as well as recounting any awards won at Invitationals, Regionals, and Nationals. I also make sure that they get the poster and program booklet based on some noted legal show such as Perry Mason, the Practice, LA Law, etc. that AMTA provides each year as a souvenir as well.

Is doing this a lot of extra work? Yes! I have negotiated to get the trial advocacy classes I teach where mock trial is the lab portion counted as part of my load. However, the real payoff is seeing the growth in ability and maturity that participation brings to the

students. For example, I have had a couple of foreign-born students who showed tremendous improvement in one season in their ability to speak publicly in English due to mock trial competition. I have seen many students grow in ways not typical for a "normal class", and I have developed much closer relationships with the students on the team than with the typical student I see only in a regular class.

In addition to the extra effort I have expended on mock trial teaching at my school, I have also invested time and resources in participation in AMTA, as I had previously done with MAPLA. I believe such collegial professional organizations are good for our nation, the prelaw fraternity, and those who participate in them. I welcome you to join my colleagues and me in furthering this worthy cause.

Dr. Don Racheter is Professor of Political Science and at Central State College in Iowa.



So, You Want To Create A Prelaw Web Page.....

by Steve Frank

Perhaps you have considered creating a prelaw web page, but secretly had to admit that you didn't know the difference between ".com" and ".org." Fret no more! You, yes, even you can create a basic prelaw web page right now.

About three years ago, I created a prelaw web page, which is now one of three I have created and maintain. At the time, I knew very little about creating web pages. I had not taken any classes or done any real reading on how to create and maintain a web site. But I created one nonetheless, and it has proved very useful to our students. Trust me—if I can do it, you can too.

“
1 Make a plan.
Who is it for?
Why do I want one?
 ”

went to my word processor and just started making a page. Learn from my mistakes! The first thing to do is make a plan:

Purpose—Why are you creating your own prelaw web site? Who is your intended audience? My initial purpose was to give students already at SCSU a way to access information without necessarily seeing me. I hoped to reduce the "traffic" at my door involving routine matters and provide readily accessible answers to commonly asked questions.

The Preliminaries-Or Do As I Say, Not What I Did

When I began my first page, I violated almost every rule for doing a project that I teach students in my Research Methods class. I didn't have a plan, and I didn't outline the process I wanted to follow. Instead, I

I did not anticipate, but quickly found out, that my web page is accessed by lots of people whom I barely know or have never met. The first group of users are prospective college students, making the website a bit of a recruitment tool for our University. Next, according to the Director of our Advising Center, our aca-

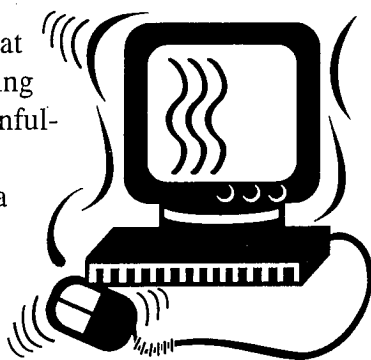
demic advisors often use it to help students who are unsure about majors and careers. I find that the site is also used by graduates and others seeking information on the LSAT.

I also did not anticipate that my initial purpose in creating the site would go largely unfulfilled. Perhaps it is just my anecdotal impression, but a fair number of prelaw students appear to want a lot of "face" time with their advisor, so having a website did not reduce the traffic as much as I hoped. It does give students more information, however, making initial meetings more productive.

Search the Literature (beg/borrow from others)—The easiest way to build a website is to do a web search using a keyword such as "prelaw". Find a few prelaw sites that you like. Few, if any, are copyrighted for design or layout. If you find specific sections or substance of a site you like and do not want to

reinvent the wheel, contact the person who did the page. You will find many prelaw advisors with web sites will allow you to use their material. Some, like Margot Baker at Southern Methodist, even sent me their disks and told me to use what I wanted.

Find and Use Your Resource People— I suspect every campus has computer technicians whose job or desire is to assist you. You may even have a colleague in your own unit with web page experience who will assist you with tips and critiques. Whoever they are, find them, use them, and pamper them. They will assist and teach you how to load your site onto a server, how to make changes, and how to fix things that go wrong. After you have run through problems once or twice, you will probably know enough to fix them and make changes on your own. Remember, if your page will be linked to your institution's page, you may have to follow certain guidelines and formatting, all the more reason to tap into its existing sources of computer knowledge.



Doing the Page

Programs such as FrontPage will help you create web pages. If you want to use a specialized web page program such as FrontPage, check to make sure your server will support FrontPage components. But you need not get fancy. I mainly use Microsoft Word. Word 2000 has even more bells and whistles than does Word97. Other editors such as Word Perfect are just as good. You can download a free version of FrontPage Express.

When outlining a prospective page, the number one rule is to make it simple. I suggest first doing only an initial index or cover page. You can add other components later. Create the page as you would a regular text document, and just save it as a "web" or "html" page. Most editors allow you

“

2 Research=surf the web Resources=take a geek to lunch Risks=just do it

”

to preview your document as a web page before it is loaded. If you are happy with this initial page, load it with the assistance of a staff person or colleague. You now have a basic web page. You can add other components as your schedule permits.



Graphics

If I were to critique my own pages, I would have to admit that some of them have too much "glitter". The old adage "keep it simple stupid" is probably a good rule to follow. However, you will need some graphics if you want to include user-friendly components such as links, "go back," "under construction" and email graphics. Most of these are free and are available by simply doing a search for graphics.

Free tools and graphics can be found at:

<http://www.int-usa.net/users/nex/freeg.htm> [Links for various free graphics sites]

<http://www.toolzone.com/> [get free counters, marques, etc.]
<http://apps3.vantagenet.com/> [do some free "quickie" polls]

Word and other editors usually include various styles, themes, background colors, and some clip arts and graphics you can use.

Word also includes a user-friendly way to create links to other sites on your page and other links to prelaw organizations such as LSAC. It also provides an easy way for users to directly email you.

Feedback and Changes

Again, do not try to do all at once. Create an introductory page. Starting with a very basic web page will give you some initial experience in creating a page, getting it loaded, and updating and expanding it. Before you add onto it, seek feedback from potential

users and from those who may have a bit more experience with pages than you do.

A few years ago, I thought it was necessary to be a techno geek and know all aspects of programming, software, and hardware. For most of us, this goal is not realistic in terms of time and other constraints; moreover, it's not necessary to creating a successful web page. Just as I am putting the final touches to this article, I swear I just saw a t.v. ad that claims there are only 10 commands to know to make a web page. So "just do it".

Dr. Steve Frank, SCSU Professor of Political Science (his pages can be viewed and comments addressed to at:

Home page: <http://tigger.stcloudstate.edu/~t00001/>
Prelaw Homepage: <http://condor.stcloud.msus.edu/~prelaw/>
SCSU Survey Homepage: <http://tigger.stcloudstate.edu/scsusurvey/>
E mail: sfsurvey@stcloudstate.edu

In Memory of Sam Schaff, First President of

by Robert Munkres

Dr. Sam Schaff, long-time prelaw advisor and Registrar Emeritus at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, passed away after several years of failing health. He was preceded in death by his wife, Ruth.

Sam was perhaps the principal driving force behind the original formation of MAPLA in the early 1970's. For three years the fledgling organization was partially supported financially by law school contributions. In 1975, a "Steering Committee" was created for the purpose of planning the transition of the new organization from the stage of preparatory planning to formal existence—Sam chaired that committee. When the organization held its first meeting, in Evanston, Illinois, as an independent organization, Sam was elected as the first president of the organization.

He continued to serve MAPLA in a variety of ways, perhaps the most significant of which was his editorship of the "PreLaw Advisor's Working Manual," copies of which were subsequently distributed to the membership. On at least one occasion, the

MAPLA

Board of Directors met in Granville at Denison University, at which time Sam and his wife, Ruth, graciously hosted the group at a dinner in their home. For those who knew Sam, the address of their home was most appropriate—atop Mt. Parnassus! Nancy Cable, former Denison prelaw advisor and currently Director of Admissions at Davidson, spoke for all when she referred to her "deep admiration for Sam—his values, his dignity, his fine work ethic, and his superlative personal warmth."

Robert Munkres is a Professor of Political Science and Prelaw Advisor at Muskingum College.

MAPLA SURVEY

We are interested in obtaining feedback about your reactions to the articles contained in the newsletter. Dr. Steve Frank at St. Cloud University has written a short on-line survey you may access at the following address. Thank you for your comments.

<http://tigger.stcloudstate.edu/~t00001/MAPLA.htm>