



MAPLA

"Briefs"

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear MAPLA Members,

I hope you are enduring winter well--warm greetings from cold Michigan!

This is my first official letter to you as President. You may be aware that last May, I was asked by the Board to complete the presidential term of Gretchen Furlow of Ohio State University who had to step down from her role due to health reasons. I am happy to announce that Gretchen is doing much better and was even able to join us for our last board meeting. It's great to have you back, Gretchen!

San Diego Conference. Many of us were at the San Diego Conference in November when we had an opportunity to learn more about pre-law advising while reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. A huge thank you goes to PLANC and especially to Mary Schilling (former MAPLA member and now at the College of William & Mary), Conference Chair, for the impeccable organization of this event.

2001 MAPLA Conference. Speaking of conferences, be sure to mark your calendars for the **MAPLA 2001 Conference, Thursday, September 27 through Saturday, September 29, in Chicago.** The conference site will be the Holiday Inn Chicago City Centre, just two blocks away from the Magnificent Mile and the Marriott, where the Chicago Forum will take place. Many of you had lamented the rising cost of the MAPLA conference hotel while insisting on keeping the proximity to the

Chicago Forum. The Holiday Inn has recently been renovated and we were able to negotiate a competitive rate (for downtown Chicago, of course, everything is relative!) of \$151.00 per single/double. Please earmark those travel funds. The Board met in February to outline the conference program and I am happy to share that we are off to a great start. Several of the sessions are going to revolve around the myths and the realities surrounding our roles as pre-law advisors and the legal profession in itself. Stay tuned for more details.

Job Descriptions & Length of Terms. One of the first tasks undertaken by the new Board was to compose detailed descriptions for each of our roles. We hope these descriptions will serve also as a recruiting tool as we strive to entice new members to join the Board. We continued to discuss the pros and cons of lengthening the terms of some of the executive officers' positions in the future. While we are committed to bring new faces on board, we are also facing the challenge of rapidly losing some of the historical memory of our association and of having shorter-than-average terms on the Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC). The revolving-door type of presence we currently have at PLANC is affecting our impact on and role in the federation representing the various regional Associations of Pre-Law Advisors (APLAs.)
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(President's message, continued from page 1)

MAPLA Caravan. The 2001 MAPLA Caravan schedule has been finalized (please see our website at www.mapla.org for details) and we are already working on the 2002 schedule along with the National Recruitment Calendar Planning Work Group, under the auspices of LSAC. It is our hope that by moving up the planning of these events, we will have better attendance, a more geographically- sound sequence of sites, and reduced logistical challenges in reserving facilities. Francisco

Santamarina (University of Chicago) and Heike Spa (University of Chicago School of Law) will coordinate the 2001 Caravan. A big "thank you" to both of you for undertaking this project.

Stay warm until we connect again!

I remain yours truly,

Mariella Mecozzi, University of Michigan
MAPLA President

BEST BETS ON THE NET: Websites for Pre-law Advisors

A selected list compiled by Mariella Mecozzi,
Assistant Director of Pre-Professional Services, Career Planning & Placement,
University of Michigan Ann Arbor

COMPREHENSIVE LAW SITES

- ◆ **Law Services**
<http://www.lsac.org>
Webpage of Law School Admissions Council (LSAC). Convenient link to Reggie to register for the LSAT, subscribe to LSDAS, and order a variety of LSAT preparation tools, legal education books and law school application software (LSACD.)
- ◆ **Internet Legal Resource Guide**
<http://www.ilrg.com/>
Expansive site with information on law schools, LSAT preparation, application strategies, rankings, and pre-law guides from various colleges.
- ◆ **Hieros Gamos (Pre-law section)**
<http://www.hg.org>
Comprehensive list of links to sites for law schools, law firms, bar associations, legal journals and much more. A bit overwhelming, but a good way to explore what is available on the WWW. Five language choices.

RANKINGS

- ◆ **Boston College Locator**
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/svp/carct/matrix.html
The locator lists the 25th to 75th percentile LSAT scores and GPA ranges of first year classes at accredited law schools. The locator can help students identify schools where their scores and grades are most competitive for admission and help them gauge their chances of admission at a particular school.
- ◆ **US News & World Report Rankings**
<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/beyond/bcrank.htm>
On-line version of the U.S. News rankings, including matrix that allows sorting on different qualifiers, e.g. median LSAT, bar passage rate or placement success rank.
- ◆ **Wehrli's Rankings**
<http://wehrli.ilrg.com/jddetail.html>
Currently being revised. An ample collection of law school rankings from popular to "judge and lawyer reputational" to composite.

TESTING SERVICES

- ◆ **Kaplan**
<http://www.kaplan.com/lsat/>
 Sections cover the LSAT, admissions, and Kaplan programs.
- ◆ **Princeton Review**
<http://www.review.com/law/>
 Information on the LSAT, law school in general, and programs/publications from Princeton Review.
- ◆ **HOME LSAT**
<http://www.home-lsat.com/>
 Information on first LSAT prep program available over the Internet.

PRE-LAW ADVISORS ON THE INTERNET

- ◆ **Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors**
<http://www.mapla.org/>
 Your very own connection to colleagues in the Midwest region. Information on membership, conferences and a link to an abridged version of the Law School Admission Profiles.
- ◆ **Pre-Law Advisors' National Council (PLANC)**
<http://www.planc.org>
 Link to national council's programs, members and news.
- ◆ **Pre-Law Listserv Discussion Group**
 An Internet discussion list designed as a forum for pre-law advisors, law school admissions officers, and representatives of Law Services. To subscribe, send the message: subscribe prelaw-l your_e-mail_address to the address: majordomo@elon.edu. (Please note that it is PRELAW-L "ell" not "one".) For questions, contact the list owner directly, Nim Batchelor, at batchelo@elon.edu.

PARALEGAL EDUCATION

- ◆ **National Federation of Paralegal Associations**
<http://www.paralegals.org/>
 Site for paralegal career information, educational programs, job postings and on-line newsletter.

- ◆ **National Association of Legal Assistants**
<http://www.nala.org/>
 Contains career and certification information for legal assistants.

MISCELLANEOUS RELATED SITES

- ◆ **American Bar Association**
<http://www.abanet.org/legaled/home.html>
 Comprehensive site with information ranging from bar admissions and statistics to post-JD education and study abroad programs. Check the pre-law section at www.abanet.org/legaled/prep.html.
- ◆ **Council on Legal Education Opportunity**
<http://www.abanet.org/cleo/>
 Contact info and details regarding this program, designed to assist economically and educationally disadvantaged individuals who experience difficulty in gaining admission to law school.
- ◆ **National Association for Law Placement**
<http://www.nalp.org/>
 A good site for employment trends in the legal field, salary surveys, and legal recruitment activities.
- ◆ **Canadian Law Schools**
<http://www.canadalawschools.org/>
 A practical resource for prospective law students created by the Council of Canadian Law Deans. Includes links to individual schools, a map, and a searchable directory of Canadian law teachers.
- ◆ **Phi Alpha Delta Law International Fraternity**
<http://www.pad.org/>
 Information on Phi Alpha Delta, including its Pre-Law Program for undergraduates interested in law. Information on chartering a pre-law chapter of PAD.
- ◆ **U. S. Department of Education Homepage (Financial Aid section)**
http://www.ed.gov/prog_info/SFA/StudentGuide
 General information on federal financial aid is followed by specifics on loan, grant, work-study and other programs. Includes a link to the FAFSA form.

Editor's Note: For your students who would like to get an idea about the structure and format of examinations in law school (or for students who complain that their UNDERGRADUATE exams are too difficult), you can find copies of law school exams given at Harvard within the last few years in various areas at http://www.law.harvard.edu/Administrative_Services/Registrar/exams.html.

A Word about Personal Statements

**By Shelli Soto, Assistant Dean of Admissions
University of Texas**

Many law school applicants find the personal statement to be one of the more difficult writing assignments encountered. The topic is, in most cases, broad and undefined, leaving the applicant to question whether or not he/she has chosen the "winning" story to tell. However, some schools may suggest or require a particular topic. In the end, just as you must tailor each application and its attachments to the individual school being addressed, the personal statement must meet the needs of each law school. In fact, it may be necessary for an applicant to create more than one personal statement to meet the requirements of each school to which he/she is applying. Just remember: when a law school application asks you to address a particular topic or gives you specific limitations on your personal statement, follow their guidelines.

If there is not space allotted specifically for information regarding extracurricular and community activities, honors and awards, and work experience, the personal statement may be the avenue to present that important information. However, if the opportunity is given elsewhere in the application (e.g., a resume requirement, or a question/short answer section), you must be wary of repetition. Law school applications allow limited space. With the premium on space and the need to sell yourself, each page should be used to present information not available elsewhere in the application. After presenting information about involvement and accomplishments, you should think about whether or not there are any pieces of your application that will raise questions in the mind of the reader, and you should address those. Many law schools will allow optional attachments to address a

history of poor performance on standardized tests or other parts of our application that need further explanation. For those schools that do not allow extra statements, you should inquire as to the inclusion of such information in the personal statement.

Many law schools are unable to conduct interviews. The personal statement can be used as a substitute for the interview to get across the information that would be shared in a personal meeting. In the common case of the personal statement with the undefined topic, the applicant will need to do some honest self-analysis. Generally speaking, law schools have chosen to term this essay portion of the application a "personal statement" because it is intended to give you the opportunity to deliver more "personal" information. You should try to provide some insight to your character and motivations by relaying a story about yourself. Perhaps you will want to describe a particular day in your life that has had an impact on the person you are today, or a story about your family or educational background, or a more in-depth look at one of your accomplishments or involvements. Your experiences can show a lot about you.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, showing a solid command of writing skills is imperative in the personal statement. Spelling and grammar must be thoroughly checked. Ultimately, the topic you choose and how well you write about it will weigh in the overall decision on your application. Bring yourself to life in the personal statement. It is more difficult for a reviewer to deny a person than it is for him/her to deny a file.

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Financial Aid 101- Information for Prelaw Students

by Ann Weitgenat, Financial Aid Counselor
Valparaiso University School of Law

Most students planning to continue their education, worry about the financial aspect of pursuing an advanced degree. Over the years the increase in tuition has deterred many individuals from pursuing a degree beyond their bachelors and the question of how much financial aid they will receive usually determines whether they will continue past their undergraduate degree.

Several institutions and private loan companies have developed websites to address the concerns and questions student have about securing financial aid. The following is a list of financial aid resources:

Law School Admissions Council
<http://www.lsac.org>

The Financial Aid Information Page
<http://www.finaid.org/finaid.html>

Law School Resources
<http://www.finaid.org/finaid/focus/law.html>

The Access Group
<http://www.accessgroup.com>

LawLoans/Sallie Mae
<http://northstar.org/students/programs/grad/grad.html>

Scholarship Research Network
<http://www.finaid.org/finaid/srn.html>

Fast Web for Student Services, Inc.
<http://www.fastweb.com>

Cost of Living Site
<http://www.homefair.com>

Some other key contacts are:
the **Internal Revenue Service** at 1-800-829-1040 or the
Academic Management Services, Inc. at 1-800-635-0120 or 401-431-1290.

The timeline below is a brief overview of how the financial aid system functions.

Individuals who have previously filled out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal-Student Aid) should have received a renewal FAFSA or pin number in the mail. However, if they filed after the March 1st deadline they will need to complete a new FAFSA for the 2001-2002 academic year. This process can be completed via paper FAFSA or electronically at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Students can begin filing their FAFSA applications after January 1. Three to four weeks after filing the FAFSA individuals will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR). Corrections may be sent to the federal processor if necessary.

Once a university has received a copy of the student's SAR it will begin to assemble a financial aid packet indicating gift aid and loan eligibility. Admitted and continuing students selected for verification by the federal processor will be notified about requested documents. Towards the end of the spring semester, exit counseling is held for graduating students.

Before the beginning of the fall semester, students will be required to complete Entrance Counseling in order to receive federal funds. Most universities will have Entrance Counseling on the web for the student's convenience. However each University has its own policies on the federal procedures and students should ask about the individual school requirements.

To be eligible for financial aid students must:

- Be enrolled at least half-time with at least six credits per semester;
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress;
- File the FAFSA;
- Be a U.S. Citizen or an eligible non-citizen;
- Not be in default on a federal loan or owe a refund or repayment on any federal or state program.

For more information on Federal Student Aid contact the Direct Loan Servicing Center at 1-800-557-7394 or contact your University's Financial Aid Office.

A Task Too Important to Neglect: In-House Preparation by Colleges and Universities for the Law School Admission Test¹

By James Yoho, J.D., Ph.D., Pre-Law Advisor, Wilkes University

However we may regard the validity of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), there is no question that it is a significant factor in law school admissions. It is argued here that of the various options available to pre-law advisors who would assist advisees to prepare for the LSAT, a sound in-house preparation program is best. That, of course, raises the question of how to go about instituting in-house preparation.

Options Available to Pre-Law Advisors

Pre-law advisors rise--or, sometimes, regrettably do *not* rise-- in different ways to the challenges presented by the LSAT. On a continuum, the least ambitious response is to basically ignore the entire matter. Chosen by more pre-law advisors than you might suppose, this particular option typically is accompanied by one or both of a couple of homilies, one of which is "The LSAT really is an intelligence/skill test, so apart from taking a practice test or two, there's no way to effectively coach anyone for it." This coaching-is-to-be-shunned view is reinforced--and perhaps even inspired--by virtue of being, in effect, the company line of the test-maker, the Law School Admission Council (LSAC), and its basic constituency, the law schools of America. They take real comfort--or at least refuge--in the considerable difficulties that would be involved with gathering competent empirical evidence of the effectiveness of a particular type of preparation. A cynic could not help but notice that the validity claimed for the LSAT by its maker--i.e., as a test of the intellectual skills that are vital to success in law school--would be undermined by an admission that the test can be effectively coached, as this would suggest that the LSAT measures, at least in part, nothing more than one's ability to cope with the test itself.

The other homily that accompanies this least-ambitious approach is the more subtle "Our students seem to do just fine on the test without my help." If one really is happy with the scores of advisees, then there *is* a certain logic to this approach. Of course, it never will be known just how much higher advisees' scores might have been if their school's pre-law program took seriously their preparation for the LSAT. It also seems likely that this rationale focuses on the higher achievers at the expense of the lower, if not also the middle: i.e., how many students who got a 140, 156, or 163 might have scored 144, 165, or 168, respectively, with better preparation?

Ideally, competent social scientists would conduct scientifically sound experiments to study the effectiveness of particular LSAT preparation techniques. However, this would be both somewhat tricky and perhaps also expensive--and who would care to fund research of this sort? Not the LSAC or individual law schools, which presumably would not want to seem to dignify test preparation with such serious consideration. Not the big test preparation firms, which only want to advocate the effectiveness of *their own* course. And not colleges and universities, which have too many other claims on their resources and face similar issues concerning their own use of other standardized "skill" tests such as the SAT I: Reasoning Test, the Graduate Record Examination General Test, and the Graduate Management Admission Test. And can you imagine what would come next if particular preparation techniques were shown to be effective? That particular sort of assistance would have to be made available to all test-takers or whatever remains of the credibility of the whole standardized testing empire that has arisen in the last half-century would crumble!

In short, the controversy over whether there are effective LSAT preparation techniques is not likely to be satisfactorily resolved before the next appearance of Halley's Comet. Until and unless adequate studies are done, it will be necessary to evaluate LSAT preparation in an essentially qualitative manner--and here, too, part of the difficulty is *what* particular LSAT preparation techniques to study.

The next least ambitious option on the continuum for pre-law advisors is to supply advisees with a list of test preparation providers while declining to make a recommendation. However, there is an inherent contradiction to this approach that is only rarely recognized: if a pre-law advisor has an adequate basis for recommending test preparation in general, then it might be supposed that there also is a basis for choosing among the various preparation providers. Is it that pre-law advisors who take this approach are not necessarily convinced that test preparation is generally effective, but may nonetheless furnish provider information because it seems better--e.g., more defensible--than doing nothing? Even if the pre-law advisor believes that at least one test preparation course is effective, a specific recommendation may not be made lest it seem that one competitor is being given an advantage over another--which, of course, would be true (although not done arbitrarily).

More or less in the middle of the continuum is the option of recommending a particular LSAT preparation course, and here the big commercial courses do well both because they are pervasive and pre-law advisors often succumb to the rationale that you generally get that for which you pay. In short, the expensive courses often are deemed best. Pre-law advisors even have been known to pooh-pooh the difficulty of raising a cool thousand or so for a prep course. That will be true for some advisees, but certainly not for many--and probably not for most. There also is the rationale that a course must be effective if it is supported by a huge advertising budget, or just has a prestigious corporate affiliation: "After all, Kaplan is owned by *The Washington Post!*" Rarely is such a recommendation based on students' course evaluations or classroom observation

by the pre-law advisor. How many pre-law advisors who recommend a particular course even systematically ask for evaluations of the course by their advisees--or, for that matter, get them from the course provider? Here, the mantra of outcomes assessment appears to have been discarded.

It also usually is easy enough for a pre-law advisor to arrange the next most active option, which is to have a commercial test prep provider offer a course on campus. This does not necessarily have to be coupled with an endorsement of the course, in which case the pre-law advisor usually offers a rationale that resembles "I just want to give my advisees another option"--although one could offer the same rationale for informing advisees about career opportunities in stripping rather than just those that are associated with having a law degree. And pre-law advisors should be aware that endorsement is likely to be inferred by the pre-law advisees even when the pre-law advisor intended nothing of the sort: after all, advisees will reason, the school brought the company onto campus and the pre-law advisor made sure we had the course information.

If the pre-law advisor explicitly endorses a commercial course that is being offered on the campus, it may be thought that this suggests a relatively dynamic pre-law program: *we supply the best in LSAT preparation!* But at a time when many schools feel ever more pressure to explain how their programs differ from others, how distinguished and distinctive is it, really, to offer the same LSAT instruction as can be found in a few hundred other places around the nation? It is not often that we see colleges and universities deferring to external commercial instruction that, when not being promoted by the school, also may be found advertised on such media as beach towels and busses! Actually, what is implied by this approach to LSAT preparation is that the pre-law advisor believes a course should be supplied by the school but does not believe that its "higher educators" can come up with anything better, or has a conviction concerning what particular LSAT preparation techniques work best but the school does not choose to teach them itself.

Not infrequently, a commercial test preparation operation is brought onto campus without the approval, or even involvement, of the pre-law advisor. This can serve to seriously limit the pre-law advisor's future options in arranging for an LSAT preparation provider, as now a turf problem may well have been created: a course that is undesirable in the eyes of the pre-law advisor is being offered through a venue such as the continuing education office or the career services office, but the pre-law advisor may not be able to suggest even a competing course--much less replacing the existing one--without raising an administrator's hackles.

Certainly there is room for honest disagreement about all of this, but it should be considered whether the LSAT preparation options listed so far, if any one was to be chosen by the pre-law advisor, would not represent a failure of some combination of nerve, expertise, and initiative. It is amazing how little of the self-confidence that usually is exuded by academics is in evidence when it comes to LSAT preparation. For example, a professor who is teaching a course in physics confidently proclaims what texts will be used, what ideas are important, and how the material will be presented. This also is true in subjects that lend themselves only to qualitative rather than quantitative study, such as philosophy or literature. How close to that level of prescription--or even to that shown in other aspects of their own pre-law programs--do pre-law advisors, collectively considered, come when they advise about preparing for the LSAT?

Luckily, and as the preceding comments suggest, there is an additional option for LSAT preparation, one that can serve pre-law advisees well and thus distinguish a pre-law program: do it yourself. The first step is that the pre-law advisor conclude that it at least *appears* that LSAT preparation can be effective and resolve to offer a thoughtful and competent in-house preparation option. Certainly, there are obstacles to doing so, the principal two being how to ascertain *what* to teach and how to find the time to put it all together. Luckily, neither is as tough a problem as it might seem at first blush.

How to Ascertain *What* to Teach

The threshold here is to appreciate that although there are certain types of substantive knowledge that will benefit takers of the LSAT (e.g., logic) despite its status as a "skill" rather than a "knowledge" test, an LSAT preparation course should focus on *procedure* rather than substance. For example, if an advisee has reached the point of taking the LSAT but still has not developed much of a vocabulary, remedial education should not be undertaken. An emphasis on procedure emphasizes the *process* by which answers are ascertained rather than just why the right answer is right. For example, even the wrong answers should be discussed so that test-takers come to see the nature of the distraction (standardized testing jargon for "sucker bait") that it offers. In essence, a good LSAT preparation course breaks down, into a series of manageable steps, the various tasks that must be executed in order to correctly answer the questions.²

That having been said, the obvious question becomes how to produce this procedural synthesis. First, get a start on thinking procedurally by consulting the latest annual edition of the *LSAT/LSDAS Registration and Information Book*. Obviously, one starts by understanding such basics as the structure of the LSAT and the three question types. However, the registration book also includes some basic *procedural* suggestions for test-takers. Eventually this effort must produce specific suggestions that go well beyond these basics, but every course-writer has to start somewhere.

Second, try to apply this basic procedural knowledge while taking a sample LSAT, one of which is in the registration book (be careful never to use anything other than real LSATs). As the results are reviewed, question by question, take careful notes of such details as what was confusing and what procedures produced correct answers. When a question was answered incorrectly, try to decide what went wrong, procedurally speaking.

Third, step back from what has been done so far and make an initial attempt to formulate *procedural* suggestions that would be of assistance to test-takers.

Set aside personal insecurities, which are quite natural; after all, no one need see this first draft, or even the next five. Some of the suggestions that eventually will emerge from this process likely will apply to all three question types, while others will be unique to just one or two of them. Continue the process of taking sample LSATs and reflecting upon the attendant procedural techniques until an approach has been refined that is sophisticated enough to be of real help to test-takers.

This is nothing more or less than what is done by other preparation course writers. To see a few examples of the efforts of others, check out one of the LSAT preparation books that are published by the commercial firms. Do this to get a better sense of what needs to be done, but resist the urge to use these other efforts as any sort of foundation: not only are they often not specific enough procedurally, but sometimes they are wrongheaded. These companies may be making a fortune from selling these books and the preparation courses that employ the same techniques, but there is nothing particularly special about what they do. Consider, for example, that one who is writing an in-house course has the resources of a college or university at his or her disposal. Why not consult a professor who is familiar with educational psychology about the dynamics of standardized tests, or one who teaches English how to go about reading difficult prose?

And, yes, the instructor *will* need to be able to explain, within the context of delivering a procedural approach to the LSAT, why the right answer is right and the wrong answers are wrong for those sample questions that are covered in the course.

Finding Time to Put it All Together

There is no question that developing an LSAT preparation course is a task that will take some time, as will teaching the course itself. Thus, it is necessary to address how the necessary time will be freed up from other tasks. The answer is simple: sufficient additional financial compensation to make it worthwhile.

An in-house course need not necessarily be developed and taught by the pre-law advisor, but that certainly is a possibility--and it would be surprising, indeed, to hear of a pre-law advisor who was doing so who was not being paid in addition to whatever salary otherwise goes with being the pre-law advisor. Should, say, a dean who is contemplating whether to provide such additional compensation to a pre-law advisor want to know how other schools handle such matters (and deans often take great comfort in following the herd), the precedents will be easy enough to find.

If the pre-law advisor nonetheless does not want to take on this project, presumably there is someone else around who would be attracted by some combination of the chance to be useful, the intellectual challenge, and some extra income. In order to make the course as closely associated as possible with the school, ideally this would be a faculty member. However, even a preparation course taught by someone from outside the school can be very closely associated with the host school.³

When setting the compensation for the teacher of an in-house LSAT preparation course, keep in mind that the course must be made worth the time of someone who will be expected to work hard, both in and out of class, and bring considerable intellectual and teaching talents to bear for, hopefully, several years. It is suggested here that the compensation be \$800-\$1,000 a day. Consider the following: clearly, LSAT preparation can be properly taught in two days (say, 9-5 with an hour for lunch)--notwithstanding that some commercial courses have bloated to about 40 contact hours. If the course registers 10 students at \$250 each, there is nothing problematic about an instructional fee of \$1,600-\$2,000 for a two-day course unless the school is determined to use the course to generate income rather than serve advisees.

A school presumably could get *someone* to offer a course for, say, half or a fourth of what has been suggested here--but to what effect? In fact, the instructional fee should go *up* if the total number of registrations is higher, because this reflects that students are being attracted by the credentials of the

instructor, including the positive word-of-mouth on the course that soon should be generated. So, for example, with the twenty-first student the instructional fee should be a straight \$80-\$100 per student; thus, the fee. Thus, the fee for a course with 28 registrants would be \$2,240-\$2,800. *This* is how a school attracts and keeps an instructor who is committed, credentialed, and talented..

Handling the Other Details

If a qualified instructor who is prepared to develop and teach an LSAT preparation course has been arranged, the rest is relatively easy. Here are a few additional recommendations for resolving the rest of it.

First, it must be recognized that a failure to attract a sufficient number of registrants will impair the economic viability of the course. Thus, it is critical that the pre-law advisor have sufficient confidence in the course to not just mention it to advisees, but also to *recommend* it to them. If the pre-law advisor is the instructor and thus is concerned about the conflict of interest considerations, simply mention this to advisees: "I realize that I have an interest here because I'm paid to teach the course, but I set this up in the first place because I believed it'd be a better option than what otherwise would exist."⁴ If the instructor is someone other than the pre-law advisor, this will not be a problem anyway. After even one offering of the course, the word of its quality will get around rather quickly and this will assist with future enrollments.

Registrants from outside of the school also should be sought, as this increases not only course revenue but probably also the reputation of the pre-law program at the host school. Every community has residents who are thinking about attending law school, as do neighboring colleges and universities; as to the latter, the pre-law advisor may be willing to recommend the course to advisees.

All of this requires a plan for promotion of the course--and someone who will execute it. Basically, there are two options here. For one, the pre-law

advisor can find an administrative locus for the course outside of the pre-law program, such as the office of continuing education. At most schools, that office already is geared up to promote courses and receive registration fees. Be forewarned, however, that many continuing education administrators believe in paying rather little for teaching. The other option is for the pre-law advisor to handle all of this, the registration fees being handled according to whatever rules exist at the school. One advantage of this option is that the "profits" from the course can be used for the benefit of the pre-law program--e.g., scholarships for the course.

Second, do not doubt the importance of the quality of the credentials of the instructor and the teaching. For example, would you suppose the better instructor of an LSAT preparation course more likely to be a local lawyer or law student, which is typical fare for the commercial courses, or a college or university pre-law advisor or professor? The in-house course easily can feature an instructor with credentials that are impressive enough *on their face* to help draw in registrants, if this information is used in marketing, as certainly it should be. Typically, the credentials of instructors for the commercial courses are unknown to prospective students and, even if disclosed, run-of-the-mill. A positive experience in the course--which requires the *reality* of good teaching skills, not just the promise--will generate good word-of-mouth.

And gauging the reality of the quality of teaching means that each course should be evaluated by at least students, if not also--at the inception, anyway--an experienced educator. Here is a significant difference between in-house and commercial courses: the can exercise real quality control over an in-house course, whereas there usually is little, if any, evaluative information available for a commercial course.⁵

Third, the sample LSAT that is in the annual registration bulletin is convenient to use for course materials, as it will be necessary to review a real LSAT. The bulletin is free; otherwise, sample tests can be purchased for \$8 each. It also is likely that the LSAC will waive its copyright for schools that would

like to hold down costs by photocopying LSATs; however, a request to LSAC should be made before the sample tests are copied.

Finally, the test-taking techniques that are taught in the course still must be practiced by the students after the course has ended. This practice time could be built into the course itself, certainly, but that only would protract its length and, presumably, also increase its cost. There also is a limited capacity of students to attend multiple sessions, which is why two day-long sessions, presumably on one or two weekends, work best. The students always can arrange to practice together, perhaps with the assistance of the pre-law advisor. For practice, registrants should be supplied with an *LSAT TriplePrep*, which has three complete tests and is sold by the LSAC for \$16.50. They also should be told during the course *how to practice*. [*Editor's Note: LSAC now publishes a book of 10 pretests for \$29.00. It can be ordered from the LSAC webpage or from the publications order sheet in the LSAT/LSDAS Registration book.*]

Conclusion: This Can Be Done!

Some colleges and universities already have been providing successful in-house courses for many years, so obviously this can be done. It is not quite the proverbial rocket science, but real thought and effort are required. The potential benefits to advisees are not to be underestimated. As pre-law advisors, we may not be able to make the rules, but we can help

our advisees learn how to better play the game!

¹ This paper was presented to the Third National Conference for Pre-Law Advisors in San Diego on November 17, 2000.

² The reader might reasonably wonder about the author's basis for conclusions like these concerning the techniques of LSAT preparation, the mercifully short answer to which is that he gained extensive applied experience while working for four years—including two as vice president—with a prestigious educational consulting firm, Spiegelberg Associates, that has provided LSAT preparation courses through colleges and universities in the mid-Atlantic region for the last 20 years. The author, who also has been an adjunct faculty member at two law schools and served as the pre-law advisor and member of the political science faculty at Wilkes University since 1995, now has his own educational consulting firm that provides LSAT preparation courses through colleges and universities.

³ It might be argued that a preparation course no longer is "in-house" under such circumstances, but it still would be a course offered by the host school. The use of the host school's own pre-law advisor or faculty as instructor gives a course a bit more of the host school's imprimatur, certainly, but this is not essential.

⁴ In this case, it also is advisable to ask a colleague, especially one who is knowledgeable about the pre-law program, to routinely review the financial arrangements for the course and speak up to whoever supervises the pre-law advisor if there is an issue as to whether the best interests of the pre-law program are being served. This will protect the program, the pre-law advisor, and even the supervisor.

⁵ A school that is particularly interested in measuring a course's effectiveness can conduct a pre-test using a real LSAT, which then can be compared to the LSAT score. However, this is not without logistical problems: the school will have limited control over various factors, such as whether the course-taker follows the advice given in the course—especially an exhortation to practice what was learned in the course—or shares their LSAT score, and it would be ideal to also give a pre-test to a control group.

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From the Editor: If you have any suggestions for future articles for the MAPLA Briefs, or, even better, if you would like to *contribute* an article, please contact me at ca-leach@csu.edu. The next edition will be coming out early this summer.

Carol Leach, Editor