**So You Want to go to Law School**

**Part 1**

February 2020

This is a multipart series on getting into and going to law school. It is never too early in your undergraduate career to start thinking about going, planning your steps, and putting those steps into action. This short piece is a starter – one that will hopefully get you thinking.

Before jumping into the process of applying, you need to ask yourself several questions and you need to have good answers to them.

**1. Why?** Yes, why do you want to be a lawyer? If you can’t come up with a good answer to this question, you might start thinking about what you really want to do with your life. Just wanting to be a lawyer is not enough; there surely must be a reason why and it should be a good reason. AND ‘why’ is a very important question. The answer to that simple question may well be the key to your personal statement in the application process. Not only does the law school want to know ‘why’, but you should want to know – it’s that important. Oh, and “I want to get rich” isn’t a good answer.

When answering the ‘why’ question to yourself, I hope that you haven’t based you decision on what you have seen on TV and in the movies. I can’t think of one movie or TV show that bares any resemblance to the real life practice of law. Yes, bits and pieces may, but not the whole show. How many TV shows have you seen about lawyers that do nothing but property law, or write or review contracts all day? No, almost all of the shows are about trial lawyers – good versus evil in the courtroom. And although many lawyers say they go to court, probably less than 10% of lawyers actually try cases on a regular basis. Considering that only 2 to 3% of civil cases go to trial and only between 3 and 7% of criminal cases go to trial, the 10% guess is probably too high. The truth be known, many lawyers don’t want to go to trial and may well be afraid of having to try a case. And there is a big difference between appearing in court to file some paperwork or set a trial date than actually trying a case.

Also, there have been lots of people that think they want to be lawyers but after a semester or year in law school, decide they really didn’t want to. That’s a pretty expensive mulligan. If there’s any question, think about it some more before you jump in and spend all that money and time. I also know more than a handful of ‘lawyers’ that don’t practice law and don’t want to. The practice of law, regardless of the field that you practice, is not for everyone. So, again, **WHY?**

**2. Where** do you want to go to law school? And why that school? Again, wanting to go to a particular school because you believe it is the best law school may not be true. What you really want is the best law school FOR YOU. We’ll talk more about specific schools in a future part. Your choice of school actually makes a big difference on a lot of things, such as target GPA and target LSAT score. What you learn in law school will probably be a big part of what type of law you actually practice when you get out of school. Where you go to law school also leads to the third question – and it’s a biggie.

**3. How** are you going to pay for it? Law school isn’t cheap. It is hard to give a clear answer to the question of ‘how much does it cost’ because everyone is different in resources, savings, and parents willing to pay for it. Most sources quote an average amount of debt of a graduating law student as between $90, 000 and $125,000, and that’s after paying at least some of the costs as they go. So, how are you going to pay for law school? In a later article, we will look at the average costs of various law schools.

The above three questions make my head hurt. Spend some time thinking about them and answering them to yourself, because if you come into see me, I’ll probably ask you those same questions.

For an appointment to discuss law school and the admissions process, email me at [jwjacks2@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:jwjacks2@cougarnet.uh.edu). When you do, give me several days and times that work for you. This will give me an opportunity to make sure that I’m not already booked.