

CLOSING THE PRE-LAW TRANSFER GAP:

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO UNIVERSITY

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For transfer students, the transition from community college to university during the sophomore and junior years comes at an important time in the law school preparation process. In their second year of college, community college students must choose a transfer program and apply for admission and financial aid. Since many community colleges lack pre-law advisors or programming, many of these students may miss the opportunity to take advantage of law

school prep summer programs, LSAT practice exams, and other pre-law activities that are normally offered to university sophomores. Then a new transfers their junior year, they may be overwhelmed as they navigate a new university and miss out on valuable time for LSAT prep, internships, and exploration of potential law schools.

What can you do as a community college student to ensure that you do not get lost in this transfer gap?

CLOSING THE TRANSFER GAP

Even while at the community college, remember that you are also a future university student. As you make your transfer choice, you should become familiar with the resources available at the university, including the pre-law advisor, clubs and activities, and other programs.

1. PRE-LAW PROGRAMMING AND ASSISTANCE AT TRANSFER SCHOOLS SHOULD BE ONE OF YOUR CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A PROGRAM, BUT NOT THE ONLY ONE.

During your second year at community college, you will need to select a transfer university. While proximity and financial considerations are often top criteria for transfer decisions, pre-law programming and assistance are also important for you as a pre-law student. At a minimum, you should look for a university that can offer you pre-law advising and assistance with the law school application process. Since there is no specific major required by law schools, pre-law degrees are not the norm. The fact that a university does not have a specific pre-law degree, certificate or program need not eliminate that university. Many offer pre-law opportunities outside of class, such as a pre-law club or society, moot court or mock trial, mentorship programs, or law-related internships that can be equally important on your law school application and your decision to pursue a law career. In some cases, research fellowships, internships, or honors programs can build the skills you will need for law school, even if they are not specifically under a pre-law program. The university needs to be a good fit for you in terms of size, faculty accessibility, financial aid, pre-law opportunities, and other personal considerations. In other words, consider the total package that a transfer university offers.

2. ASK REPRESENTATIVES FROM TRANSFER UNIVERSITIES TO CONNECT YOU WITH THEIR PRE-LAW ADVISOR.

As you make your transfer decision, you will likely visit your college's transfer office and attend transfer fairs. When you make contact with the transfer universities that you are considering, ask about pre-law programming and get the contact information for the pre-law program, pre-law advisor, or the most relevant department. Early contact allows you to create a personal connection with the person(s) who may be guiding you through the law school application process in the near future. If there is a pre-law advisor or office, they can give you an overview of what pre-law options are available at the transfer school and help you determine if the university is a good fit for you, since law school preparation will be an important part of your university experience.

3. ONCE YOU DECIDE ON A TRANSFER UNIVERSITY, MEET WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S PRE-LAW ADVISOR, PREFERABLY BY THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER BEFORE YOU TRANSFER.

If you're transferring in the fall, for example, meet with the pre-law advisor as early in the spring as you can. Waiting until fall may mean missing out on scholarships with Spring deadlines, as well as summer law school preparation programs that can be beneficial after your sophomore year. This early contact is even more important if your community college does not have a pre-law advisor.

Pre-law advisors at transfer universities will likely be happy to hear from you earlier rather than later. The university pre-law advisors that I have worked with have noted that one of the biggest problems they face with transfer students is lack of contact when they first arrive. I have heard sad tales about transfer students who do not contact the pre-law advisor until well into their senior year and miss law school application deadlines. Unless you know that you want to take time off after graduating, you should at the latest be in touch with the pre-law advisor no later than when you first arrive at the transfer school. I have yet to find a university pre-law advisor who did not gladly help an incoming transfer student. If you do not have a pre-law advisor at your community college, have your academic advisor, transfer center, or the transfer university's admissions office help you set up a meeting with the pre-law advisor, perhaps as part of your campus tour, or feel free to contact the pre-law advisor directly.

What should you ask in your meeting with the transfer university's pre-law advisor, especially if you have not had a pre-law advisor at your community college? Here are some example questions:

- ▶ Are there specific certificates, minors or other programs at the university for pre-law students?
- ▶ Are there workshops to help with law school applications or LSAT preparation?
- ▶ What pre-law activities are available? How much time commitment do they normally require?
- ▶ Is there anything that you recommend doing during the summer before I arrive? During my first semester?