Pre-Law Advising Information

If you are interested in a career as a practicing attorney or if your goal is to obtain a law degree that you will use in another profession it is useful to begin your academic preparations for selecting, applying, and succeeding in law school.

The place to begin is with a discussion about preparing for a career in the law. The LBCC Pre-law advisor is political scientist Doug Clark. He can be reached at his office (T-212); by phone: 541-917-4557; by e-mail: doug.clark@linnbenton.edu; or by snail-mail at LBCC, 6500 SW Pacific Blvd., Albany, OR, 97321

Considerations:

What Should I Major In?

Your choice of a major is largely up to you. There is no such thing as a “pre-law major” or even a “most desirable major.” Law schools are among the few professional schools that don’t require a particular major or a particular set of courses for admission.

The best advice is to major in a field that interests and challenges you while requiring you to master the basic skills of legal study: reading, critical reasoning, and writing. A few students already know what aspect of law they want to be involved in, and it makes sense for them to choose a major accordingly. A person whose goal is to litigate cases involving collapsed bridges might, for example, major in mechanical engineering.

But that’s the unusual case. Many people are better advised to keep their options open by choosing a major that provides a broad background and solid skills for the specialized studies that will come in law school. Some of the most common majors for pre-law students are political science, history, philosophy, business, and speech. However, successful law students have come from such diverse majors as agriculture, English, foreign languages, physical education, engineering, and chemistry; so don’t feel constrained.

American Bar Association Recommendations:

Because practice of the law has so many features, and individual lawyers are so diverse, The American Bar Association recommends that no specific group of undergraduate majors, or courses, should be ruled as the best way to prepare for law school. Instead, they emphasize a broad base of learning experiences that include classroom studies, extra-curricular school activities, and everyday living. The pre-law student should seek to establish the crucial skills of being able to solve problems analytically, to read critically, to write with clarity and conciseness, to speak persuasively, to listen scrupulously, to research thoroughly, and to organize information effectively.

Law school will refine critical thinking and analytical problem solving capabilities. However, it is essential that the student have these abilities reasonably well developed prior to
enrollment. Classes and experiences that cultivate a tolerance for uncertainty in structuring arguments for or against propositions that are open to reasoned debate are especially valuable.

For more detailed information about preparation for legal education see: http://www.abanet.org/legaled/prelaw.html