



University of Chicago Law School, Chicago, IL

[By Heather Jung]

The University of Chicago Law School believes in teaching based on the interdisciplinary education system. This method blends the study of law with studies in humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. According to the school's website, this devotion to interdisciplinary education stems from the "conviction that the law does not exist in a vacuum; we can understand the law and legal methods only if we understand both how the law affects the behavior of the society it governs and how the law reflects the values of that society." Faculty members are not only lawyers but also philosophers, historians, economists, and medical doctors.

Because of its interdisciplinary approach to teaching, many people believed the school would fail when it first opened in 1902. Today, however, it is a Top 10 law school, and the interdisciplinary method is widespread. In his letter to prospective students, Dean Saul Levmore describes the drastic changes the school has undergone during its first 100 years:

"In our first century, we evolved from an upstart school with five teachers, 75 students, a small set of courses, and no building into a place that is at the leading edge of legal education, with interdisciplinary approaches, an amazingly productive faculty, and a formidable library. Our graduates go on in record numbers to clerk for leading judges, to build businesses, to teach, and, of course, to practice law. We begin this second century with newly renovated classrooms, public policy initiatives that seek your involvement, a new program supporting public interest careers, and post-graduate opportunities that are second to none."

In addition to employing a unique teaching approach, the University of Chicago Law School is one of the few law schools in the country that use the quarter system rather than the semester system. While initially a source of concern for many students, the quarter system has its distinct advantages. Since quarters are shorter than semesters, the university can offer three to four sessions of a class each year. The overall amount of time spent in school is the same as it is

under the semester system, but students have three sets of classes and professors each year instead of two.

Prospective students are often concerned about the number of exams they will have to take during the first year. The school's website assures students that they will not have more exams than first-years at any other school. Some classes will overlap from quarter to quarter, so students will sometimes have two professors but only one exam. During the first quarter, students have two exams. During the second and third quarters, students have three exams, with the possibility of a fourth during the third quarter, depending on the electives they choose to take.

Because University of Chicago Law School is a Top 10 law school, admissions are highly competitive. The admissions office expects 5,000 applicants for the 190 to 195 class-of-2010 spots. The average undergraduate GPA for incoming students is 3.66, and the average LSAT score is 171.

The school offers numerous opportunities for students to get involved. It is home to three legal clinics: the Edwin F. Mandel Legal Aid Clinic, the Immigrant Children's Advocacy Project, and the Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship. The clinics give students hands-on experience under the supervision of clinical teachers. There are also more than 50 student organizations and activities, including Amicus (for married students),

Neighbors (a public service group that helps the Hyde Park neighborhood), Scales of Justice (an a cappella group), and Law School Musical (a student show that features new lyrics put together with familiar tunes and original dialogue to create a parody of law school life).

In an effort to alleviate growing educational problems in the United States, the law school has partnered with Teach for America, a national corps of college graduates dedicated to helping students in inner-city schools reach their full potential. Through the program, college graduates (of various majors) commit themselves to teaching at urban schools for two years. In order to encourage graduates to participate in this program, University of Chicago Law School offers several incentives: a two-year loan deferment for those who are accepted into the program, application fee waivers for Teach for America teachers and alumni interested in attending the school, and scholarships for qualified participants.

Since opening its doors, the school has had some very distinguished alumni. Some of the nation's most influential and prominent lawyers and politicians obtained their J.D.s at the school. University of Chicago Law School's list of notable alumni includes former U.S. Attorney Generals John Ashcroft and Ramsey Clark; the first openly gay U.S. ambassador, James Hormel; and Carol Moseley-Braun, the first African-American woman elected to the Senate.



Students who enjoy big-city life will love Chicago. According to the 2005 Census, Chicago has a population of 2,842,518, the third-largest city population in the United States. And along with that metropolitan population comes a metropolitan lifestyle.

Those interested in the arts will not be disappointed, as Chicago is a mecca for the arts. As the birthplace of modern improvisational theater, Chicago is well-known for its theater scene. Amongst the hundreds of theater companies in Chicago are the world-renowned Steppenwolf Theatre Company (co-founded by Illinois native Gary Sinise), the Goodman Theatre (built as a tribute to playwright and Chicagoan Kenneth Sawyer Goodman), and

the Victory Gardens Theater. The city is also home to numerous museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Sports fans are sure to love at least one of the city's 15 sports teams. Chicago is home to two Major League Baseball teams (including the White Sox, the 2005 World Series champions), a championship NFL team, a world-renowned basketball team, a championship soccer team, and one of the Original Six NHL teams.

"Chicago has a vibrant nightlife with plenty of options available no matter which nights of the week are convenient," said 2L Frank

Busch. "Beyond that, I make sure to check in on the city's world-class comedy clubs and museums periodically. Even just spending a couple hours walking around the zoo with a friend can make for a great afternoon."

ON THE NET

University of Chicago Law School
www.law.uchicago.edu

Dean's Message
www.law.uchicago.edu/prospective/deanletter.html

Steppenwolf Theatre Company
www.steppenwolf.org