



University of Pennsylvania Law School, Philadelphia, PA

[By Heather Jung]

A Top 10 law school, the University of Pennsylvania Law School received more than 5,600 applications for the class of 2009. When classes begin this fall, the class will consist of fewer than 250 of those potential applicants. The average GPA of the entering class was 3.7, and the median LSAT score was 170. Although the school follows a traditional J.D. program of study, it is known for being extremely rigorous.

According to the school's website, the "curriculum also has unrivaled depth, allowing you to choose from a dizzying array of electives from your first year to your third, from these more traditional courses to those in emerging fields, and also allowing you to supplement your legal education with courses at the esteemed graduate and professional schools at the University of Pennsylvania through our cross-disciplinary program."

In an effort to keep up with the ever-blurring lines and parameters of "traditional" legal issues, the law school has created a cross-disciplinary program. The program exposes students to a multitude of other disciplines in order to enhance their critical thinking and ability to navigate today's world.

Students at Penn Law can customize their law school experiences through several out-of-the-classroom options, such as study-abroad programs, student organizations and publications, and various clinics.

Penn Law offers multiple options for students to study abroad. It offers six formal study-abroad programs in conjunction with Wharton's Lauder Institute in locations such as Japan, Germany, China, Israel, Spain, and France. Areas of study include international business law, international trade law, contracts, and litigation.

The school offers more than 70 organizations in which students can participate:

- Students interested in practicing for their futures can participate in one of three moot court or mock trial competitions.
- Affinity programs such as the Asian Pacific American Law Students Association, Jewish Law Students Association, Lambda Law, and United Law Students of Color Council allow students of particular ethnic, cultural, and identity groups to come together and discuss the issues affecting them daily while striving to increase diversity awareness and sensitivity.
- Differing greatly from traditional student organizations, the sole purpose of conference-only groups is to allow students to meet to organize conferences and raise awareness about varying topics. The school's conferences invite scholars, professionals, and public interest advocates to address students.
- Cross-disciplinary groups such as the Chinese Legal Studies Association, Penn Law Real Estate Club, and Environmental Law Society are geared toward students who are interested in particular areas of law.
- The two political groups (Penn Law Democrats and Penn Law Republicans) allow students to become involved in various facets of politics, including national politics and major campaigns.
- Students who want to learn how to foster their professional and spiritual development can participate in religious groups such as the Muslim Law Students Association and the Christian Legal Society.
- Social groups like the Iron Chef Club, Law School Light Opera Company, and Melange Wine Tasting Society allow students to show off their talents or educate the community about various topics.
- Sports groups keep students fit while allowing them to network and engage in healthy competition with their classmates.
- Students who are passionate about today's hottest issues (such as the feminist movement, abortion, and the environment) can get their voices heard by participating in special-interest groups.
- There is no better way to represent student views to faculty and the school administration than through participation in a student government organization like the Pre-Law Mentoring Program or the National Lawyers Guild.



- Since the school requires students to do pro bono work prior to graduating, it is no wonder there are whole organizations devoted to the cause. The public service program plans special events for the community.

Students can also choose to participate in one of the school's clinics, which, according to the director for clinical legal studies, "prepares students to become skilled practitioners by applying theory learned in the classroom to the realities of actual legal problems. Students also experience the challenges and satisfaction of representing real clients in need of legal services while benefiting from first-rate faculty supervision and guidance." Students can choose from the Civil Practice Clinic, Entrepreneurship Clinic, Mediation Clinic, Legislative Clinic, Interdisciplinary Child Advocacy Clinic,

Transnational Clinic, Criminal Defense Clinic, and upper-division "Lawyering in the Public Interest" seminar.

Dean Michael A. Fitts describes Penn Law best when he states:

"Society in the 21st century increasingly demands lawyers who are not only well prepared in the conventional areas of legal education but are also knowledgeable of and comfortable in fields intertwined with the law. At Penn Law, our top-tier faculty are leaders in more traditional as well as cross-disciplinary scholarship, and they—and our talented students—are thoroughly integrated into the broad intellectual life of the University of Pennsylvania. Unlike most law schools that remain isolated from their universities, Penn Law has followed the opposite path, nurturing relationships with as fine an array of law-related professional

schools as you will find in the country. Students can easily enhance their first-rate legal education through study in many associated disciplines, either through matriculation in a joint-degree program or by taking up to four courses in other departments."

ON THE NET

University of Pennsylvania Law School
www.law.upenn.edu

Student Activities at Penn Law
www.law.upenn.edu/prospective/studentactivities.html

Clinical Program at Penn Law
www.law.upenn.edu/clinic