
LAW SCHOOL

29 CRITICAL QUESTIONS
TO ASK TODAY

UNIVERSITY
OF MIAMI
SCHOOL of LAW



*We hope you find the information in this brochure useful as you decide where to apply and enroll.
Please visit our website (law.miami.edu) and don't hesitate to
contact us for additional information (admissions@law.miami.edu).*

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Law School: 29 Critical Questions to Ask Today

1. *Should I go to law school?*

Only you can answer this question. Law school is a serious academic, financial, and emotional commitment, and should be entered into with 100% effort. Applicants who have already entered the work force sometimes face a significant lifestyle change as they once again become students. Think this decision through thoroughly and be prepared to give it your every effort.

2. *Is law school as challenging as they say?*

Yes but the rewards are worth it. Most graduates will tell you that law school was a significant academic challenge but one that they would not trade. The majority of Miami's alumni agree with this statement. Our mission is to train you to master both the theory and craft of the law. You will learn to analyze complex issues from every angle and depth, and to present well researched and persuasive arguments in both written and oral form. These skills will assist you in every aspect of your life.

It is wise to speak with current students and alumni from the schools in which you are interested. We encourage applicants to contact our students and graduates to discuss not only their experience at the University of Miami, but also the profession in general. It is important that you make an informed decision, and we will assist you in whatever way we can.

3. *When should I apply?*

There are 200 ABA-accredited law schools in the U.S. and although the admissions process is similar at each, there are important differences. Some law schools have strict application deadlines, while others make decisions on a rolling basis. It would be wise to visit the website of each school to which you are applying to learn about specific policies. Should you still have

questions after reading brochures or online information, contact the schools directly.

At the University of Miami School of Law, applications are reviewed, and scholarships are awarded, on a rolling basis. Reviewing applications on a rolling basis means that files are read as soon as all required documents are received (application, processing fee, letters of recommendation, personal statement, and LSDAS/LSAT report). Although the preferred application completion date is February 1 (January 4 for scholarship consideration), **completing your file by the beginning of December or earlier will place you in the most favorable position for both admission and scholarship** consideration. Notification of the admission decision is typically sent within four weeks. Applying electronically through the LSDAS service is preferred.

Again, completing your application early is strongly advised. We know that the application process can be tedious, so contact us if you have concerns about your file.

4. *What are law schools looking for?*

The class profile is important to enrolled and prospective students, faculty, the legal community, as well as employers. Therefore, law schools are looking for the most competitive and interesting applicants possible. Find out the average credentials of the first year class at the institutions you are considering to see where you fit in. Ask schools not only their median LSAT and GPA for accepted and enrolled students, but also those numbers at the 25th and 75th percentiles for the enrolled class. Remember, an applicant who is denied at one school may be a solid candidate at another school.

At the University of Miami, all aspects of your file will be reviewed. Your LSAT score and GPA are important in the decision-making process, but you will also be reviewed as an *individual*. Miami is seeking an eclectic student body and wants students who are going to be intellectually



engaged, disciplined and fun to teach. Thus, extracurricular, professional, and individual experiences are also important in the application review process.

For Miami's 2009 entering class, the 75th and 25th percentiles for undergraduate grade point averages were 3.66 and 3.24, respectively, and the 75th and 25th percentiles for LSAT scores were 159 and 155.

5. *I have never performed well on standardized tests, and my freshman year was rocky. Do I have a chance of being admitted to law school?*

You are not alone in being concerned about your grades and standardized testing history. There are many applicants who outperform their standardized test predictions if given the chance. Nevertheless, a low LSAT will be a stumbling block. It is important to review your credentials realistically and compare them to those required by the schools in which you are interested. Do your research and apply to at least one school you feel is your safety school, while also applying to your dream school.

A mediocre academic performance in the freshman year is not unusual. Hopefully in such cases, the transcript will reflect a steady or dramatic rise in grades that balances out a poor start. Your LSDAS report will summarize your grades for each year and will include copies of your transcripts for law schools to review.

At the University of Miami, your LSAT and GPA are not considered in a vacuum and it is not possible to state that one is given more weight than the other, though both are important. Your file will be reviewed in its entirety, taking into consideration your recommendations, the competitiveness of your major and undergraduate institution, work experience, extracurricular activities, your overall grade point average and the pattern of these grades, your personal statement, and your LSAT score.

6. *How should I prepare for the LSAT? Am I able to repeat the LSAT?*

It is important to go into the LSAT as prepared as possible. This may mean paying for a review course and preparing on your own. There are numerous LSAT study guides that you can purchase at any bookstore, and you may buy released LSAT exams through LSAC. You are allowed to sit for the LSAT a maximum of three times over a two year period; however, taking the test multiple times is costly and may be counterproductive. Some law schools will average your test scores, some will take the highest score, and others will take the most recent score. You should retake the LSAT only if you feel confident in your ability to increase your score.

At the University of Miami, all LSAT scores are considered when reviewing files. In most cases, the higher score is given greater weight. If you repeat the exam and want to explain the circumstances, write a brief addendum in the application. Miami will accept an LSAT score for a five-year period, with the June test as the marker.

7. *How should I approach letters of recommendation? Who should I ask and how important are they?*

Schools requesting letters of recommendation (LOR) would not ask for them unless they thought they were useful. While recommendation letters may not always be pivotal in the review process, if your credentials place you in the gray zone and yet you present outstanding recommendation letters, they may push you over the admit line.

Be careful in determining who to ask. Many law schools may prefer to see LORs from professors as they can assess your academic work, overall skills, discipline, and potential to succeed in the rigorous environment of law school. If you have been out of school for a number of years and are unable to obtain



recommendations from former professors, you may substitute recommendations of employers or other persons with whom you have worked closely since graduation.

When you approach your preferred recommenders, don't presume anything. Ask them "Do you feel comfortable writing me a strong letter of recommendation?" If they are not so inclined, this will give them an opportunity to decline or if they hesitate, give you an indication of their tepid enthusiasm. Try to choose professors who not only know you well but whom you feel will take the time to write you a strong letter (unfortunately plugging in names on canned letters has become more commonplace). Once professors have agreed to write the letter, give them your resume and ask to spend a few minutes with them so you can answer any questions they may have.

The more a recommender knows about you, the more relevant and genuine your LOR will be. Give your recommenders plenty of advance notice – you don't want your LORs to be written in haste.

Miami Law asks for two LORs. At least one (and preferably both) of these recommendations should be from a faculty member who is familiar with your academic performance and has had an opportunity to evaluate some significant aspect of your academic work. LORs can be very useful in our assessment of your ability to succeed and willingness to work hard. If you have two strong academic LORs and wish to submit additional letters, e.g., from someone who has knowledge of you in a professional setting or a leadership role, you may submit those as well.

8. *Are there particular undergraduate majors preferred for admission to law school?*

Law schools are not looking for one particular undergraduate major. Students are admitted to law school from almost every discipline. What is

most important is how you perform in the major you choose, and what core and elective classes you take to enhance your critical thinking, writing, logical and analytical reasoning, and reading comprehension skills.

In Miami's 2009 entering class, there were over sixty undergraduate majors represented. The top undergraduate majors at Miami in recent years include accounting, biology, business, criminal justice, economics, English, finance, history, international studies, journalism, philosophy, political science, and psychology. However, remember that we review applicants from many other majors such as math, engineering, music, etc.

9. *How important is the personal statement in my law school application?*

For most law schools, the personal statement (sometimes referred to as the statement of purpose) is a vital part of your application package. Make sure you read the application language carefully because some schools may have specific questions for the personal statement, while others allow more creative license. There is no one formula for the perfect personal statement - it is supposed to be about you, your journey to this point, your goals, and so forth.

At the University of Miami School of Law we encourage you to submit a personal statement that will reflect who you are and what you will contribute to our student body. Highlight your strengths. Avoid using the personal statement to explain your weaknesses; you can do this in an addendum. The personal statement is also an opportunity to showcase your writing abilities. Let your depth and energy shine through.

Proofread your statement very carefully to be sure you are using flawless punctuation, grammar, and spelling. Do not regurgitate everything on your resume; again, highlight your strengths and present what you think we should know about you. While it is wise to have several people whom you trust review



your statement for general commentary, the statement should be written by you alone. The optimal length of the personal statement is approximately two pages.

10. *Should I only consider going to a school in the location I want to practice?*

It makes sense to *consider* schools in the geographic areas where you might be interested in settling; however, this should not be the primary reason you choose a school. Law schools with national reputations provide job fairs and networking opportunities so that their graduates can be placed throughout the U.S. Ties with different legal communities can be developed during summer clerkships or clinical placements. In the current legal job market, it is not unusual for law graduates to change jobs several times within five years of graduation.

The University of Miami School of Law has a strong national reputation and places students across the country for both summer positions and permanent jobs. Miami's alumni can be found in almost every state as well as internationally. Not surprisingly, many students fall in love with South Florida and decide to remain in the area even though they have opportunities elsewhere.

11. *Should I choose a school that seems to have more offerings in the area of law in which I think I want to practice?*

Depending on your goals, some schools may be better suited for your areas of interest because of the number of professors and courses offered in those areas. However, many students will change their minds about what they want to practice, so initial interests may be less important by the time of graduation. Getting a well-rounded, interdisciplinary legal education is most important in preparing you for the practice of law.

Miami has approximately 60 faculty members complemented by over 100 outstanding

adjunct and visiting faculty. The School also has full-time and part-time Legal Research and Writing instructors who provide excellent tutelage in skills critical in law school and in practice. These LRW classes are very small with about 20 students in each class.

Miami offers over 200 courses, workshops, and seminars each year. If you decide you want to specialize in a particular area of law, Miami offers LL.M. degrees, as well as joint programs. For more information on Miami's LL.M. and joint degree programs, refer to the next question.

12. *What is the difference between joint degrees and LL.M. programs?*

Joint degree programs allow you to earn two degrees concurrently, with some courses credited toward both programs. A joint degree may take from three and a half to five years to complete, depending on the intensity of the program. LL.M. programs, unless offered jointly, typically require applicants to have completed their Juris Doctor degree, are usually earned in one year (full-time), and concentrate on an area of specialization.

Law students at the University of Miami have the opportunity to combine their J.D. degrees with master's degrees and LL.M. programs, realizing savings in time and tuition over earning the degrees separately. Joint J.D./master's degrees are offered in Business Administration, Public Health, and Marine Affairs. Joint LL.M. degrees are offered in International Law, Ocean and Coastal Law, Real Property Development, and Taxation. Students applying to any of the joint programs must qualify for and apply to each separately.

Miami offers five highly regarded graduate programs leading to a master of laws (LL.M.) degree. Graduates of ABA-accredited law schools may apply directly to these programs and in most cases, candidates with a law degree from a foreign law school who have a demonstrated ability to do graduate work and



who satisfy the TOEFL requirement, will also be considered.

Miami's LL.M. programs are offered in Taxation, Estate Planning (the only law school graduate program in the country devoted exclusively to estate planning), Real Property Development (offering both a full-time in-residence program as well as a part-time distance-learning program), International Law (which includes specializations in U.S. and Transnational Law for Foreign Lawyers, Inter-American Law, International Law, and International Arbitration), and Ocean and Coastal Law.

13. *How concerned should I be about the student body? How important are student organizations?*

Your law school education begins in the classroom. The more diverse the student body, the better the exchange of ideas and exposure to different points of view. Having, or lacking, a diverse and active student body affects the dynamics of the classroom, the types of courses and programs offered (e.g., guest lecture series, conferences, moot court, law reviews, volunteer programs, etc.), and the individual day-to-day interactions you will have with your colleagues.

Lawyers are problem solvers and troubleshooters – what better way to learn these skills than in a diverse and engaged environment? Extracurricular activities will enhance your learning process, be a valuable addition to your resumé, and increase your networking opportunities. The extensiveness of activities is tied to the diversity of the students and their interests. Investigate the number and types of student organizations, law reviews and journals, social events, and other functions related to academic and student life. Seek advice from as many current students and recent graduates as you can. Listen to their experiences and focus on the comments that are important to you.

The University of Miami School of Law has an extremely diverse and energetic student body. The overall law school population is approximately 43% women and close to 25% minorities, comes from over 400 U.S. and international academic institutions, and represents over 40 states and numerous foreign countries. The age of our first-year students has ranged from 14 (and he graduated too young to sit for the Bar!), to 68 (his fellow students dedicated the yearbook to him, and he is practicing law), with an average age of 24.

At Miami, you will find five law reviews and a wide range of student organizations (over 40) including the Cardozo Jewish Legal Society, Black Law Students Association, Entertainment and Sports Law Society, Tax Law Society, Hispanic Law Students Association, Intellectual Property Law Society, Asian Pacific American Law Student Association, Environmental Law Society, International Moot Court Board, OUTLaw Society, Maritime Law Society, American Constitution Society, Business Law Council, Student Animal Legal Defense Fund, Christian Legal Society, Wrongful Convictions Project, and the International Law Society (for a complete list, visit our website). Our student organizations sponsor stimulating lecture series as well as numerous other events on and off campus.

14. *What are law reviews and journals, and how important is being a member?*

Law reviews and journals are publications which are edited and published by student members. Some publications may focus on specific areas of law, while others are not restrictive. Students usually become members based on certain qualifications such as class rank and/or a writing competition. The more competitive the criteria to become a member, the more prestigious its membership. Employers often seek out law review students to interview because there is a perceived prestige associated with being a member. Also,



members are required to produce a paper of publishable quality by the time of graduation. Being a law review member, while not essential to finding a great job, will certainly open doors for you.

University of Miami reviews include the *University of Miami Law Review*; *University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*; *International and Comparative Law Review*; *Business Law Review*; and *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law Journal*.

15. What opportunities are available in law school for gaining practical experience?

In law school, take advantage of all opportunities to gain hands-on experience. You can get experience through clinical placements, externships, moot court, certificate programs, volunteer activities, etc. If you are attending a full-time program, the policy at most schools is that you must not work in your first year; in the second and third year, you are allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours/week during the fall and spring semesters.

At Miami, courses with field components, externships, clerkships, clinical programs and advocacy projects are plentiful. These courses are typically for academic credit and some may offer stipends.

Miami's campus, approximately six miles from downtown, is ideally located for students who wish to work in their second and third years. Staff members in Miami's **Career Development Office (CDO), including nine advisors with law degrees**, will help you navigate your search to identify a rewarding experience. The CDO provides postings for clerking positions with law firms, government agencies, non-profits, public interest agencies, corporations and members of the judiciary throughout the year. Most students also gain practical experience in Florida or elsewhere during the summers.

Miami offers **certificate programs** in **Business and Financial Law, International Law, and Employment, Labor and Immigration Law**.

Miami's **Litigation Skills Program** offers unique opportunities to develop fundamental skills for pre-trial and trial practice through intensive classroom exercises and simulated courtroom trial experience. Federal and state judges, chief prosecutors and defenders, and senior partners from highly regarded law firms, teach these courses.

Students who complete Litigation Skills are eligible to enroll in the **Clinical Placement Program** in which they may choose from more than **50 local participating agencies** (Public Defender, State Attorney, Legal Services, SEC, IRS, etc). **Students may also choose a placement in another state or internationally.**

Other externship opportunities include the **Health Law Practicum and Transactional Externships**. Miami's in-house clinics include the **Bankruptcy Assistance Clinic, Children & Youth Law Clinic, Community Economic Development & Design Clinic, Health & Elder Law Clinic** and the **Immigration Clinic**. New clinics are likely to develop in the near future.

The Law School's nationally recognized **HOPE Public Interest Resource Center** serves as the starting point for students with an interest in public service. The HOPE team works with students individually to match them with opportunities that meet their interests. HOPE's advocacy initiatives include projects involving domestic violence, youth in delinquency and dependency, homeless individuals and families, immigration, re-entry and restoration of rights, voter rights, GLBTQ advocacy, law related education and literacy, workplace justice, low-income tax and will assistance, and animal rights. If you want to get inspired, visit HOPE's website and read about specific projects in which HOPE students are making a difference.



Miami's other programs include the award-winning interdisciplinary **Center for Ethics and Public Service (CEPS)** which offers programs in **Ethics & Professional Responsibility, Government Law and Ethics,** and the **Miami STREET LAW Program.**

Miami staff and faculty help students identify and obtain grants, scholarships, and postgraduate fellowships, and offer assistance to students seeking to participate in national public interest symposia. The **CEPS Summer Public Interest Fellowship Program** sponsors 20-25 rising second-year law student interns at public service organizations in South Florida. The Law School and the Florida Bar Foundation provide tuition scholarships and stipends.

HOPE Fellows work with domestic and international public interest agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide much-needed legal advocacy to children, immigrants, the homeless, victims of hate crimes, discrimination, and abuse, and others who are in need. Over the years, the program has included international placements in countries such as Tanzania, Rwanda, Lebanon, England, Sierra Leone, and China.

16. *How is the job market? Will I get a good job after graduation?*

People attend law school for a variety of reasons, and thus, the definition of a "good" job after law school is different for everyone. Before making the decision to attend law school, it is vital that you assess your values, skills and interests to determine what is a good job *for you*. Opportunities will vary from region to region and among different practice areas. Once you have figured out where and what area of law you want to practice, your marketability will depend on your law school achievements (grades, extracurricular activities, moot court or law review participation), your previous work experience, other degrees obtained, and your overall job skills. As interest in the legal profession increases, it is important to find out what services the career development office at

each school will provide in your job search.

The Career Development Office (CDO) at UM's law school gives students and alumni a distinct advantage in the legal job market.

The CDO has a staff of nine career advisors (six full time, three part time), **all of whom have law degrees.** The advisors' professional backgrounds in various areas of law enable them to assist effectively law students in regional and national job searches.

In addition to providing counseling and resume review for students and alumni, the CDO's staff markets the school to employers nationwide, identifies regional and national placement opportunities in the private and public sector, arranges on- and off-campus interviews with potential employers, and assists employers in recruiting the right candidates for their organizations. Students can make full use of the CDO's computer and printed resources to research employment and career opportunities, as well as review and copy job postings. In addition, the CDO has comprehensive employment information on its website, including local and nationwide postings that students and alumni can easily access with a password.

The CDO provides several forums for students and alumni to secure clerkships and internships, as well as permanent positions. It also introduces students to practitioners in the local community through year-round networking receptions and workshops. The Center's newsletter provides updates on relevant programs, seminars and new career opportunities.

Miami's alumni pool is over 18,000 strong. They are employed throughout the U.S. and abroad in law firms, governmental agencies, NGO's and corporations, as well as in nontraditional settings. While many of Miami's graduates choose to practice in South Florida (sand-in-the-shoes syndrome), Miami's reputation provides our graduates with options to practice nationally and internationally.



17. *How can I afford law school?*

There is no doubt that the costs for law school are something you must consider. However, you should consider it as an investment in your future. There are a variety of federal loans (Stafford, Perkins and Grad PLUS loans) to which you can apply and many schools offer scholarships based on need, merit, or a combination of need and merit. Additionally, some students meet financial need through alternative private loans as well as their own personal resources. **Complete your application early to be considered for scholarship funds.**

Miami Law School has its own Financial Aid Office and the staff is available to assist you through the financial aid process. Miami's strong scholarship program has awarded an annual **average of \$10 million in scholarship money** to admitted students over the past few years.

Selections for the **Reid, Mentschikoff, Chaplin, Leef** and **Law School Scholar** awards are based on exemplary academic achievement, demonstrated leadership qualities, and potential to contribute to the legal profession and society. Recipients are granted full tuition three-year scholarships, a \$1000 stipend per year and a full-tuition paid option to enroll in one of our LL.M. programs. **Dean's Scholarships**, ranging from \$5,000 to full tuition, are awarded to selected entering students who have applied early, excelled academically and possess other outstanding qualifications for the study of law. **Note: Complete** your file by early January to be in the best position for scholarship consideration.

While the majority of Miami's scholarships are merit based, the Miami Scholars Program* requires an application (accessible online) and targets candidates from across the U.S. who have strong credentials and a demonstrated interest in public service. Up to 22 entering law students are selected annually for the Miami Scholars Program. Each Scholar receives an annual \$25,000 law school tuition

scholarship, provided a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better is maintained. In addition, Miami Scholars are provided a stipend for a public interest summer position or granted a partial-tuition scholarship for one of our summer abroad programs** or an on-campus summer law school session, either of which can be completed following the first or second year of law school.

Only admitted students are eligible to apply and must submit the Miami Scholars application by March 1, 2010.

*See question 15 for additional information on funds for students who wish to practice in the public interest upon graduation.

**From London to Athens, Beijing to Budapest, Miami offers intellectually stimulating study-abroad opportunities in international and comparative law. Our 2010 summer abroad programs will include a visit to China, as well as numerous nations in Western and Middle Europe. Miami also offers short-term workshops in Leipzig, Germany and Zurich, Switzerland.

18. *Should I work before entering law school?*

Some people believe working prior to entering law school is essential; it allows you to gain experience, earn some money, become more mature, develop stronger time management skills, and hopefully, confirm your desire to enter law school. Others point out that once you have gotten out of the habit of studying and become accustomed to a lifestyle that includes a salary, returning to school requires a major adjustment. The important thing is to make the decision yourself and be ready for the challenge of law school – being eager to learn and having the discipline to do so can make the difference between finding the rigors of law school a rewarding challenge or a great burden. Each year, close to 50% of Miami's entering class has been out of undergraduate school for one or more years.



19. How important are the library facilities?

The library is the lifeblood of a law school, and having a mediocre facility would place you at an educational disadvantage. Investigate not only the physical plant (layout, seating space, computer labs, etc.), but also the collections, services, and staff. Often the library is a reflection of the school's dedication and commitment to scholarly research.

Miami's law library is housed in a 56,122 square foot space adjacent to complementary student services like IT and the Copy Center. The library's full-time staff of 28, including 13 professional librarians of whom five have law degrees, will provide you with the highest level of service.

Holdings include approximately 640,000 volumes and volume equivalents. The library has a comprehensive collection of American law and also collects extensively in foreign and international law and in the areas of taxation, estate planning, and ocean and coastal law. The library's collection of Latin American and Caribbean law is one of the richest in the country. Online research capabilities include Lexis, Westlaw, subscription legal databases, and the World Wide Web.

The facility also houses the Everglades Litigation Collection and papers of Soia Mentschikoff. The law library includes spacious reading areas, group study rooms, and computer labs. The law school network integrates the entire law school community, including students, faculty, library resources and administrative offices. Students may access the network via their personal account utilizing any of the 173 computers available in carrels and computer labs throughout the law library and in student organization offices. Network access ports for laptops are also found in the library. CaneNet, the University's wireless computer network, is available throughout the entire law school complex. There are currently eleven laser printers in the law library. Law students can send print jobs

to law school printers as well as additional student printers located throughout the Coral Gables campus via the wireless network. Technical assistance is provided by the experienced staff of the Information Technology Department.

The School of Law devotes substantial resources to the library's acquisitions and operations, and is proud that our law library is one of the largest and best-funded legal research libraries in the country. More information about the resources in the law library and Information Technology Department may be found on the School of Law website.

20. What should I learn about a school's faculty? How important is the student-to-faculty ratio and the size of the school?

It is a good idea to review the biographies of the faculty for each school you are investigating. The faculty will often define the breadth of the curriculum, and their areas of specialty will be reflected in course offerings. Note which law schools they attended, their practical experience, and publications and recent research projects.

Student-to-faculty ratios can sometimes be deceiving as many factors go into this relationship. Not surprisingly, large schools are likely to have larger class sizes as well as a wider selection of course offerings and teaching styles from which to choose. Whether the size of the class affects the student-faculty relationship depends primarily on the professor. How you respond to faculty members will be important; if they feel you have challenged yourself intellectually, they will be willing to spend time with you. Conversely, they will not have much patience for those who are not prepared.

When you review the biographies of Miami's faculty, you will be impressed with the national, international, and interdisciplinary dimensions of their backgrounds, and how this has positively influenced our curricular offerings. In addition to our full-time faculty and adjunct professors, the



School of Law attracts visiting scholars from around the world.

Miami, like most schools, divides the entering class into sections of approximately 50-55 students who remain together throughout the first year.

Many classes are combined with one other section in order that students mix with as many of their fellow first year students as possible. The Legal Research & Writing class is divided into much smaller groups of approximately 20 students. Upper division classes might be as small as ten students, with seminars and workshops limited to 22 students. Although Miami is considered to be a moderately large school, here you will have many opportunities to experience small classes and interactions with your professors.

There are pros and cons to large and small schools. Smaller schools may have smaller classes and possibly a more intimate atmosphere, but they may not offer as diverse a class or as extensive a faculty and curriculum. Also, smaller does not necessarily mean a friendlier or more responsive environment. As you do your research, you will begin to form an opinion as to where you will feel most comfortable. Keep your mind open and make an informed decision.

21. *What is the Socratic method?*

The Socratic method is a form of intellectual sparring between the professor and the student. Instead of using a straight lecture format, the professor will call on students to discuss the case(s) at hand. Chances are that no matter how brilliant a student's response, the professor will introduce other angles. Once students get past the intimidation factor, this exercise can be stimulating.

Many of Miami's professors use the Socratic method; how zealously they use it depends on the professor. The purpose is not to intimidate students but rather to force them beyond their self-imposed boundaries.

22. *Do law schools offer interviews?*

Most law schools do not offer interviews but do encourage you to visit their campus. It is an excellent idea to visit as many of the law schools on your "short list" as possible. This is the best way to get a feeling about the school, speak with current students, and gain valuable information to assist you in your decision-making process.

Miami offers daily tours on weekdays during the regular academic session and will gladly arrange visits to classes. Tours are given by current law students. Each fall, Miami hosts several Open Houses for prospective students and participates in law fairs and recruiting programs throughout the country. A calendar of on-and-off campus events can be found on the online Admissions Events Calendar. If financial or time constraints will not allow you to visit, the next best thing is to speak with current law students which can be easily arranged by contacting us. Additionally, online chats are offered throughout the year. Our online student and alumni spotlights, as well as other webcasts, will also give you a glimpse of life at the law school.

23. *Will law schools help me find suitable housing and a roommate?*

If a law school is interested in having you join their student body, the school should be willing to help you make the transition. Schools will often provide information about off- and on-campus housing and a roommate referral program.

Although Miami does not provide on-campus housing, finding suitable housing near the campus is not a major problem. To assist students in finding housing, the Office of Student Recruiting provides an Apartment & Relocation Guide, connections to local realtors, a housing session in conjunction with Law Day for Admitted Students, an online housing message board, a roommate referral service, and individual assistance as needed.



24. *Am I allowed to work if I am attending law school full time?*

Most law schools will not allow you to work in the first year if you are a full-time student. Upper division students are allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours a week.

Miami follows these guidelines and our Career Development Office will assist you if you wish to work during the second and third years. Miami's location in a vibrant legal and business community provides our students with many job opportunities.

25. *I am not sure of the area of law in which I wish to practice – or even if I want to practice in a traditional setting. Should I know exactly what I want to do before entering law school?*

Some applicants know what area of practice they are interested in, some think they know, and many are unsure. Very often, students change their minds about their legal interests. You may already have professional experience in an area that will be enhanced by a legal degree, and this may be to your advantage in the job market. If you do not have experience and are unclear about what area of law you wish to pursue, don't fret as time should give you the answer.

The University of Miami School of Law's extensive curriculum will offer you exposure to practically any area of law that interests you. In addition to your classroom experience, the South Florida legal and business communities provide ample opportunities for practical experience. Exposure to different areas of practice through your courses, guest speaker programs, conferences, research with professors, clinical placements, and other job experiences will help guide your interests and increase your contacts locally and nationally.

26. *I have a documented disability. Should I disclose this information?*

This is entirely your decision. Many students do decide to disclose that they have a disability, whether it is a physical disability, a psychological or learning disability, or attention deficit disorder.

At the University of Miami School of Law, we will treat this disclosure in confidence. Your classmates will not know about your personal circumstances or that you have registered for accommodations and the faculty will only know to the extent needed to arrange for classroom accommodations.

The benefit of making this disclosure is that we can work with you to determine if your disability will qualify you for any classroom or examination accommodations that will help you to perform to your full potential in law school.

If your disability may adversely affect your score on the LSAT, you may wish to apply for an accommodated test from the Law School Admissions Council. You can read more about the requirements for accommodated tests on the LSAC website (lsac.org).

Should you anticipate needing special assistance during law school, you should contact the UM Law School Office of Disability Services to inquire about arrangements at disabilityservices@law.miami.edu or online at law.miami.edu/disabilityservices/index.php. This web page highlights the guidelines for documenting your disability and having your requested accommodations reviewed by the Law School.

Students who plan to request accommodations on a bar exam should note that demonstrating a history of past accommodations will be considered and most bar examiners will expect to see testing that has been administered within five years to evaluate a request. Therefore, many students who had been tested or



accommodated prior to college will retest prior to entering law school so that they will also have current test results to submit to the Bar Examiners. Because this testing can take time, we recommend that you consider this process in the summer before you begin law school.

27. *What support systems are in place once students are enrolled?*

Support systems among law schools vary from the formal to the very informal. Many law schools will assign an advisor to first-year students, as well as give them several additional sources to approach for advice. These sources may be upper division law students, professors, administrators, and alumni. Assistance is also available for students who are having academic or personal problems.

The University of Miami School of Law offers all of the above resources. In addition, students may take advantage of our very successful Academic Achievement Program (AAP), which includes a Writing Center and exam-taking workshops. In the AAP, select second and third-year students (Dean's Fellows) are assigned a first-year course for which they organize weekly study sessions. Participation is voluntary and open to all first-year students. The goal of the AAP is to develop analytical and examination skills and early integration into the law curriculum. This program consistently receives accolades from students and professors alike.

Prior to the beginning of fall classes, Miami Law also hosts the James Weldon Johnson/Robert H. Waters Summer Institute, a program that brings together a select group of admitted students for an intensive two-week introduction to case analysis, techniques of legal research, and the elements of legal writing. These are combined with hands-on instruction, plus meaningful feedback and criticism. More details about this highly regarded program may be found online.

28. *Where can I get advice and information about law schools?*

If you are still in undergraduate school, see if your institution has a prelaw advisor and/or a prelaw society. Prelaw advisors may be able to give you general – as well as specific – information about applying to, selecting, and succeeding in law school. Prelaw organizations often sponsor guest speakers who will give you insight into the law school experience and legal practice. Additionally, law school websites are very useful sources of information. Also, don't forget to speak with current law students, administrators, and alumni. Visit schools to get a sense of student life and the campus, and attend a few law classes to experience the classroom environment.

The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) offers law school applications online through their LSDAS Service. LSAC and the American Bar Association publish the *ABA.LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*, a directory that gives advice on the application process and details many aspects of each school. The LSAC website is lsac.org.

There are numerous publications available for your use in the law school search process. However, it is important that you only use these materials as a starting point for your own research. No one publication could possibly capture the qualities that make each law school unique. You should also note that there is no ABA-endorsed ranking of law schools. Robert Morse, the man who created the law school rankings for USN&WR, states in an article in the ABA Journal' (The Rankings Czar, abajournal.com/magazine/the_rankings_czar/), that "...an indiscreet emphasis on the rankings suggests a deep misunderstanding both of what they are and how they should be used....Any student or parent who uses the rankings as the No. 1 reason to go to a school, well, that's exactly the wrong way to use them." The Law School Admission Council's commentary on rankings may be found at lasc.org/Choosing/ranking-law-schools.asp.



It will be your job to establish your own ranking based upon your individual needs. It is important, however, that the law school you select be accredited by the ABA. The University of Miami School of Law is accredited by the American Bar Association, is a member of the Association of American Law Schools, and has a chapter of the Order of the Coif, the prestigious scholastic honor society. Miami's faculty members consistently receive national and international recognition for the strength of their teaching and scholarship.

¹ABA Journal, April 2008. *The Rankings Czar: Law Deans Hate Bob Morse's Rankings. He'd Like Their Help To Make Them Better*, by Linda Edwards.

29. What can I do to prepare for Law School?

Many law students and law graduates will adamantly tell you to relax the summer before law school. You will want to enter the J.D. program refreshed and invigorated; however, it never hurts to be knowledgeable and prepared about what to expect in law school and in the profession. You may find some of the readings below useful. There are numerous Web sites, discussion boards and blogs that address the application process and how to prepare for and succeed in law school but **don't believe everything you read on blogs and other such sites.**

Current Events: The study of law is tightly woven with an understanding of our government, political process and world affairs. We encourage you to read a good national newspaper, such as the *NY Times*, *Washington Post* or *LA Times*.

Classics/Fiction: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee; *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison; *Billy Budd* by Herman Melville.

Non-Fiction (Stories about big and important cases, legal history and philosophy): *America's Constitution, A Biography* by Akhil Amar; *The Lion and the Throne: The Life and Times of Sir Edward Coke* by Catherine Drinker Bowen; *Philosophy of Law* by Joel Feinberg; *Law's*

Order: What Economics Has to do with Law and Why It Matters by David Friedman; *Becoming Gentlemen: Women, Law School and Institutional Change* by Lani Guinier; *A Civil Action* by Jonathan Harr; *The Courage of Their Convictions* by Peter Irons; *Gideon's Trumpet* by Anthony Lewis; *Lawyer: A Life of Counsel and Controversy* by Arthur Liman; *The Buffalo Creek Disaster* by Gerald Stern; *A Question of Choice* by Sarah Weddington; *Damages* by Barry Werth.

Transition to Law School: *The Legal Writing Handbook: Research, Analysis & Writing* by Enquist, Oates, and Kunsch; *Getting to Maybe: How to Excel on Law School Exams* by Michael Fischl and Jeremy Paul; *Reading Like a Lawyer* by Ruth Ann McKinney; *Law School without Fear: Strategies for Success* by Helene Shapo. The ability to write well is essential to success as a law student and lawyer. Investing in the classic *Elements of Style* by William Strunk, R. and E.B. White (fourth edition) is a must.

To request information, please contact:

University of Miami School of Law
Office of Admissions
P.O. Box 248087
Coral Gables, FL 33124-8087

Web Site: www.law.miami.edu
E-mail: admissions@law.miami.edu
Office: (305) 284-6746
Facsimile: (305) 284-3084
TTY: (305) 284-6444

Prospective students are encouraged to visit the campus for a tour of the facilities and to attend classes. Arrangements may be made through the Office of Student Recruiting by completing a visit form online or contacting us at the sources noted above. Additionally, Open Houses and Chat Rooms are sponsored throughout the year. Visit the online Admissions Events Calendar for information.

Notice: *The Law School reserves the right to modify the academic requirements, admission requirements and program of study; the programs, policies, and courses described here are subject to continual review and reevaluation, and may be changed at any time without prior notice. Please refer to the **Law School View Book or website** for further detailed descriptions.*



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