

## PCAPLA

### Advising First Generation and Low Income Students

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1. A bit about us
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2. Agenda
  - a. Who are first generation and low income students?
  - b. How can advising first generation and low income students differ?
  - c. What are some strategies for successfully advising first generation and low income students?
  - d. What resources are available to help first generation and low income students successfully navigate the law school admissions process?
3. Who are first-generation and low-income students?
  - a. First-generation
    - i. First in family to receive a degree from a four-year institution
  - b. Low Income
    - i. From an economically underserved community, or family income is less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines
    - ii. Economically underserved communities can include urban school districts, reservations, other communities where public school systems are underfunded
  - c. These two groups of students may include
    - i. Students of color
    - ii. Undocumented students
    - iii. Students from rural or underserved areas
    - iv. Veterans and active-duty personnel
    - v. Students who consider themselves first-generation or low-income
  - d. Challenge is making sure that all identities are considered when advising
4. How is advising first-gen and low income students different?
  - a. Professional Network
    - i. Students may not be able to rely on a network of family members and friends who attended law school for advice and counsel
  - b. Academic preparation
    - i. Students may feel underprepared for the transition to graduate school
    - ii. Some may have transferred from community college, not allowing time for realistic adjustment to relocation and new school setting
      1. Grades may be affected from transition
    - iii. Less time to develop working relationships with faculty for letters of recommendation
  - c. Financial considerations
    - i. Students may not have family financial support during college, and may enter law school with significant undergraduate debt

- ii. Students may be working to fund school
      - 1. Also reduces ability to pursue unpaid experiences or extra-curricular activities
    - iii. Undocumented students and veterans/active duty personnel have unique financial considerations
    - iv. Consider that many may have varying feelings, understanding, and knowledge regarding taking out loans
- 5. Strategies for advising students
  - a. Academics
  - b. Post-undergraduate experience
  - c. Applying to law school
  - d. Financial aid
- 6. Academics
  - a. Encourage students to seek out classes and resources and to improve writing and analytical skills
    - i. Never shy away from classes that encourage a great deal of writing and analysis; these are skills that are absolutely necessary for success in law school and during the application process
  - b. Discourage pursuit of extracurricular activities to the detriment of classroom performance
    - i. Common theme is for students to become highly involved in extracurricular and community activities; good experience, but doesn't make up for classroom success
  - c. Help students create a balance between class and work
    - i. Students are often working to fund school and finding a balance without guidance can be difficult
    - ii. Also important for students to know that admissions officers understand that it can be difficult to pursue both work and extracurricular activities
  - d. Encourage contact and relationship building with professors and academic mentors
    - i. Students may feel uncomfortable seeking out these relationships, but they're essential for the law school admissions process
  - e. Help students understand the impact of poor grades, incomplete classes, repeated classes, and withdrawals
    - i. Important to understand how the LSDAS GPA is calculated
    - ii. Most students do not understand how the LSDAS GPA is calculated and are surprised when their LSDAS GPA is much lower than their transcript GPA
- 7. Post-Undergraduate
  - a. Gap Year(s) - Encourage students to identify which skills, experience, or areas of knowledge they may want to build upon. Support students in identifying options that will best fit their needs.
    - i. Options may include:
      - 1. Conduct a job search for a full time job
      - 2. Student may have to work during their gap year, positions can include asking for advancement and increased responsibility in current employment
      - 3. Work part time and volunteer (this can provide flexibility while studying for LSAT and applying to law school)

- b. Encourage students to establish realistic timelines for LSAT preparation, law school applications, and scholarships. (students may want to take a prep courses, there are often reduced rates that students can take advantage of if they simply ask)
  - c. Have a conversation about the time commitment involved to finishing law school. This can help a student self assess their readiness for law school.
    - i. Questions to possibly ask:
      1. Are you burned out from school?
      2. Are there goals you would like to achieve prior to attending?
      3. Do you feel mentally and emotionally prepared for the challenge of law school?
8. Applying to Law School
- a. Selecting a Law School - Special considerations for this population beyond academics (distance from family, part-time, evening programs, etc.)
  - b. Counsel students through LSAC account creation and LSDAS procedures
    - i. This can include helping students navigate registrar's offices, how to approach professors and TAs for letters of recommendation, how to access resources for resume and personal statement review
  - c. Advise students to apply for LSAC fee waivers
    - i. Waivers take time to process, apply early
    - ii. LSAC fee waiver includes:
      1. 2 LSATs (test dates must fall within the two-year waiver period);
      2. 1 CAS registration, which includes the Letter of Recommendation and Evaluation Services as well as access to electronic applications for all LSAC-member law schools;
      3. 4 CAS Law School Reports; and
      4. 1 copy of the Official LSAT SuperPrep book.
  - d. Seek out law school admission preparation programs
    - i. Includes programs hosted by law schools, programs hosted by For People of Color, CLEO and similar organizations
  - e. Connect students with law school admission officers
    - i. Most admissions officers are very happy to speak to students and answer questions about law school applications, and law school generally
  - f. Personal statement – OK to discuss adversity, but make sure to discuss progression and growth
9. Financial Aid
- a. Develop programs to increase financial aid literacy
    - i. Ensure students understand how to apply for aid; the process differs from school to school
  - b. Encourage students to gain a complete understanding of financial aid terms and requirements
    - i. Some financial aid offers require high academic performance, may not be renewable year to year, etc.
  - c. Once admitted, encourage students to connect with financial aid officers at law schools to ask questions
  - d. Counsel students on how to engage in professional discussions about financial aid
    - i. There are right and very wrong ways to “negotiate” increases in financial aid; we mostly see the wrong ways

- e. Encourage students to seek out sources of external scholarship funding
    - i. Application deadlines can begin in November or December prior to the fall of law school entry
10. Special Considerations
- a. Undocumented students
    - i. Undocumented students can and do go to law school (and can practice law in California)
    - ii. Be knowledgeable about (and sensitive to) the impact of laws and policies affecting undocumented students and potential gaps in financial aid
      - 1. AB540 permits certain undocumented students to receive in state tuition
      - 2. Undocumented students who have been granted DACA status or have applied for DACA status are eligible for LSAC fee waivers
    - iii. Seek out and direct students to school resources for undocumented students
      - 1. Most UC and many CSU campuses have offices providing services to undocumented students
  - b. Veterans and Active-Duty Personnel
    - i. Benefits will often cover large portions of tuition and fees for veterans (and in some cases, their dependents)
    - ii. Seek out and direct students to school resources for veterans and active duty personnel
      - 1. Most UC and many CSU campuses have offices providing services to veterans and active-duty person

## 11. Resources

- a. SF Bar Association Destination Law School - [http://www.sfbar.org/jdc/diversity/educational-programs/destination\\_law\\_school.aspx](http://www.sfbar.org/jdc/diversity/educational-programs/destination_law_school.aspx)
- b. Council on Legal Opportunity - <http://www.cleoscholars.com/>
- c. For People of Color, Inc. – <http://forpeopleofcolor.org/>
- d. DiscoverLaw.org Scholarships Opportunities - <http://www.discoverlaw.org/diversity/scholarships.asp>
- e. Educators for Fair Consideration - <http://e4fc.org/>
- f. UC Undocumented Student Resources (includes info on Graduate Schools) - <http://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/>
- g. Service 2 School - <http://service2school.org/>
- h. UC Veterans and Active-Duty Personnel Resources - <http://www.ucop.edu/student-affairs/programs-and-initiatives/student-populations/veterans-and-active-duty-military-personnel.html>
- i. ABA Office of Diversity & Inclusion- <http://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity.html>
- j. ABA Commission on Women in the Profession- <http://www.americanbar.org/groups/women.html>
- k. Accommodated Testing for LSAT- <http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/accommodated-testing/>
- l. LSAC - LGBT Applicants- <http://www.lsac.org/jd/diversity-in-law-school/lgbt-overview>