Welcome to the Program

**Pre-Law Program, University of North Florida**

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Back Cover
It’s hard to believe it has been almost a quarter of a century since we created the Pre-Law Program at UNF. Over the years, the Program has evolved into a substantial asset to the University and the Department in which it has been housed. Many facets of the Program have established, enhanced, and modified, but the one constant remains the quality of work and dedication of our Program Assistants.

We have been fortunate enough that even though we only maintain a half-time assistant, we have had such dedicated individuals in that position that we’ve been able to create a high-quality Pre-Law Program and continue to enhance it over the years.

This is a trip down memory lane for me. Six of our former assistants are now attorneys scattered all over the country. Several other assistants have advanced degrees or are in the process of obtaining them. I have chosen to highlight the work of our two most recent assistants, because they each served the University and the Program over two separate terms, covering a substantial portion of time.

Peggy Baldt started with us as an undergraduate at UNF and stayed while she attended Florida Coastal School of Law, from 1998—2003, at which time she left to study for the Florida Bar Exam and practice law. She then returned to us in 2009 and stayed until her retirement and move to her home state of Virginia in 2014. Peggy was instrumental in setting up the Pre-Law Endowed Speaker Series which featured, among others, author Scott Turow, Watergate prosecutor Ken Starr, and Supreme Court analyst and noted author Jeffry Toobin. She also helped establish Pre-Law Scholarships, which have been awarded to seventeen UNF undergraduate Pre-Law students.

Angel Kalafatis’ first tour of duty with the Program was while she was an undergraduate at UNF from 2001-2005. She was an English major who was the recipient of an academic scholarship and use her writing talents to establish the Pre-Law Newsletter. She’s back on the job, starting at the time of Peggy’s retirement. Her talents are exhibited in the current issue which features both Peggy and Angel on the cover. Angel attained a high LSAT score is able to advise students on how to prepare for the LSAT.

We are fortunate to have such outstanding and dedicated assistants help us maintain the high standards of the Program. Thank you, Peggy, Angel and each Program Assistant over the years, for a job well done.
In the days leading up to my departure for Nashville, Tennessee, people often asked me why I was moving. My response, that I was leaving to attend Vanderbilt University School of Law, was met with a variety of reactions. People were often impressed, but the conversation always seemed to end with a depressing, “Good luck.” I constantly heard how difficult and stressful law school is, and to say I was anxious would be an understatement. As my first semester quickly comes to a close, I am happy to say I can look back on those days and smile. In my experience, law school has not been nearly as morbid as people made it sound. I strongly believe that I have enjoyed the experience so much for three key reasons, which I now offer to anyone starting law school in the near future as tips. If you are thinking about attending law school, consider this an inside look at the 1L experience.

**Time Management**

First and foremost, time management is key! I cannot stress this concept enough, and I promise you will hear this over and over again. Successful time management will make a huge difference in your law school experience. Everyone is different, so find a schedule that works for you and stick with it. For example, many people treat law school like a 9:00-5:00 job. They get to school in the morning, attend class and work till 5:00 p.m., and leave their evenings free for other activities. Other people attend classes for the day, take a break for a few hours, and then do their work at night. Do not stress about what other people are doing, and find a system that works best for you. If you manage your time wisely your stress level will be greatly reduced and there is no reason you should not be able to do things like go out with your friends (in moderation, of course).

**Be Prepared**

Second, do not waste your summer leading up to 1L. By all means you should have fun, but the summer is a great opportunity to make sure you are prepared. You will be at a great advantage if you familiarize yourself with some basic legal terms and concepts. If you have taken any classes with Professor Edwards, you will already be ahead of the game. For example, many of my classmates were not familiar with terms like stare decisis, a motion in limine, or voir dire. These terms were nothing new for me, and it made my
learning curve that much easier. I highly recommend reading a book such as *What Every Law Student Really Needs to Know* by Tracey George and Suzanna Sherry (the authors are Vanderbilt Law professors) or *1L of a Ride* by Andrew McClurg. These books are great for introducing you to the basics, and they also provide samples of what an outline and a typical law school exam question look like.

**Networking (ask for help)**

Lastly, do not be afraid to reach out to 2Ls and 3Ls. While it may seem intimidating at first, they were in your shoes once, and they are very aware of that. Older students will be one of your greatest resources in law school. They are a wealth of information about the law school experience in general, as well as which classes to take, the best professors, etc. Additionally, they can provide you with sample outlines from previous years. Having good relationships with older students can become a great asset when it comes time to start looking for a summer job. You are laying the foundation for your legal career, and it is never too early to start making connections.

Law school can be a fun and exciting experience. The work is difficult for sure, but in the best way possible. The readings are very interesting (especially in Torts), and the work actually is enjoyable. I have loved the time I have spent at Vanderbilt thus far, and am living proof that law school is not nearly as scary as it may seem. So in closing, be prepared to work hard, but also be prepared to enjoy it!

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*Nicole Kalkines is a Neptune Beach native. She attended Bishop Kenny High School, and graduated summa cum laude from the University of North Florida in April of 2013. Nicole is currently pursuing her J.D. at Vanderbilt University School of Law in Nashville, TN where she is on the Dean’s List and is a member of several student organizations.*
Actions Speak Louder than Words
Advice on personal conduct from a former Florida Bar Examiner

By Jennifer Grunewald

Since graduating from UNF in 2005, I have gone on to do many things. After graduating from FSU with a Master’s in International Affairs, I stayed in Tallahassee and worked as an Analyst with the Florida Board of Bar Examiners. For those of you who are interested in attending law school and becoming an attorney in the state of Florida, you will get to know these Analysts well. While everyone who graduated is so concerned with passing the Bar exam there is one other small detail that not a lot of students think about until they are in it and that is the character review.

All new attorneys and attorneys entering to practice in the state of Florida must pass a character investigation and it can be quite extensive. If there was ever an application that you needed to be totally honest and thorough on, it would be this one. There is a whole team of people dedicated to reading these applications line by line and picking them apart. Trust me! I was one of them.

Some of the best advice I can give you, not just as a former UNF grad and pre-law participant, but also as a Bar Examiner, is what you do now matters. Not just the good things but also the not-so-good things. Don’t drink and drive, don’t cheat on your exams/papers, don’t get fired from every job you have ever had, and don’t post pictures of yourself on Facebook setting your law school books on fire. If you decide to be an attorney and depending on when these things happened and pattern of events, you may find yourself having to give the most important testimony of your life defending yourself to a panel of attorneys and judges, before you even step foot in a courtroom. College can be a crazy-fun time. I know I had my fair-share of crazy wish-I-could-take-back moments for sure. If you take anything from this article, just be safe and make good choices when it counts. The ramifications of your actions can go well beyond the present moment. They could ruin your career that you have been working towards your whole life.

The analyst’s jobs are to make sure that future Florida lawyers know how to follow the law and they will be entrusted with people’s lives, money, children, and freedom. They want to know that the person they will be admitting to the Florida Bar has the character to handle those situations.

What am I doing now? Since my position at FBBE, I did some marketing work, lived in Atlanta and worked as a Membership/Marketing Director for the YMCA. Now I decided to enter the world of Real Estate and I am a Realtor with Watson Realty Corp. I have enjoyed helping people buy and sell their homes and help them through the process. I am married and have a little girl named Norah.
Almost two years ago, I took a break from practicing civil litigation to work for the National Republican Congressional Committee in Washington, D.C. as a Legal Research Analyst. Among other things, my work entailed that I meet with candidates and their teams to discuss vulnerabilities, travel to records archives, courthouses, and libraries all over the country to pull and analyze documents, and repackage information into research books for use in political advertisements. Last March when Congressman Bill Young passed away, I had the opportunity to serve as lead researcher for the FL-13 Special Election between David Jolly (R) and Alex Sink (D). In 2010, Alex Sink lost the Florida gubernatorial race to Gov. Rick Scott, however outperformed him in Congressional District 13. Because Special Election polling and statistical predictions showed the two candidates to be in a deadlock leading up to Election Day, both sides spent millions on political commercials and mailers. David Jolly, who had served as Congressman Young’s attorney but had virtually no name ID, defeated Alex Sink, and political analysts took the victory as a prediction of what would happen in the House and Senate the following year.

Last summer, after most of our research books were completed and my work had substantially slowed down, I was offered the opportunity to move back to my home state to help Gov. Scott get re-elected. I wanted more experience in Election Law and had always been interested in working on a competitive gubernatorial campaign team, so I jumped at the chance. I was hired as the Scott for Florida Deputy Director of Election Day Operations, joining one other lawyer in organizing Election Day Operations for the entire state.

What are Election Day Operations?

What are Election Day Operations (“EDO”)? I asked the same question back in July, prior to the time EDO would become my life. As far back as 2012, Democrat and Republican presidential campaigns have orchestrated teams of lawyers to help insure that elections officials don’t infringe on an individual’s legal right to vote. In Florida, voters enjoy a statutory bill of rights, which elections officials must honor. Interestingly, except for the occasional voter tweet, conduct inside polling places would not be public because reporters and laypeople aren’t permitted to enter polling places during voting hours to observe activities or take pictures. In fact, Florida law only permits voters, elections officials, law enforcement officers, individuals in the care of voters or who are caring for voters, and persons legally assisting voters, to enter polling places. To combat this issue, the legislature allows for “poll watchers” to enter polling places to observe the conduct of election officials. However, poll watchers must be registered voters in the county in which they are observing and approved in advance by the supervisor of elections.
As a director of the EDO team, I helped recruit hundreds of poll watchers and attorneys across Florida, and traveled the state training poll watchers and attorneys in Florida Election Law. Attendees included anyone from seasoned attorney observers to apprehensive 80-year-old ladies preparing to poll watch for the first time. Working with the volunteers who were enthusiastic about dedicating their time to uphold the integrity of the elections process was the most rewarding part of my job. While I was working 13-15 hours a day, seven days a week, for what would have evened out to be less than minimum wage, these volunteers were happy to poll watch for several days of the early vote period, for as many hours as needed. Their charitable dedication put my long hours to shame.

On the legal side, we spent countless hours preparing training materials, developing litigation plans should issues occur during Early Vote or on Election Day, and manning an Election Law advisory hotline. This year, discretionary Early Vote days were extended, so for the folks at headquarters servicing the whole state, Early Vote started on October 20 and lasted two weeks through November 2. Between the dozens of spreadsheets I managed shifting and organizing volunteers, the litigation plans I drafted, and the legal presentations I gave, I was wearing more hats than I had imagined possible.

On Election Day, the most eventful moments occurred when the Crist Campaign filed an Emergency Motion to Extend Polling Hours in Broward County at 6:45 p.m. – 15 minutes before all Florida polling places were set to close. Crist argued that “individual and systemic breakdowns ... made it difficult for voters to cast regular ballots,” presumably referencing a precinct at an elementary school that went offline due to power outages earlier that day. Judge Jack Tuter denied their motion, questioning why Democrats didn’t file the motion earlier in the day if some of the issues arose in the morning. Had Judge Tuter granted the motion, it’s likely the Democrats would have siphoned more votes in South Florida, as Broward County is heavily Democratic. It’s doubtful that would have lowered the margin enough to trigger a recount, but it would have made me sweat more on Election Night.

My opportunities working for the NRCC and the Scott Campaign were invaluable and I feel extremely lucky to have had the opportunities to move to D.C. and work on a campaign in my home state, within a two year span. I would encourage anyone else who has the opportunity to deviate from their normal path in law practice to do the same and work in whatever political field that interests them. The work is exciting, challenging, full of surprises, and there’s not much else like it.

Strom is an Assistant General Counsel at the Florida Department of State, specializing in Election Law. Her earlier political experience includes working for the National Republican Congressional Committee in Washington, D.C. as an opposition researcher and Majority Strategies as a mail consultant. She spent three years practicing complex civil litigation at private law firms in Jacksonville. While attending University of North Florida, Strom was active in the pre-law program and took Professor Edwards’s courses in preparation for law school. Strom graduated from UNF in 2007 and from Florida Coastal School of Law in 2010.
Alumni Feature
Patrick Bennett, Esquire

The UNF Pre-Law program would like to congratulate Board of Advisors member and UNF Alumnus, Patrick Bennett, Esq. In November 2014, Patrick was popularly elected to the Duval Soil and Water Conservation Board. In this capacity, Patrick serves the citizens of Jacksonville as a resource for natural resource conservation, preservation and education.

It’s not surprising to see Patrick’s professional success. During his academic career he was a standout student. While at UNF, he majored in Political Science with a minor in Business Administration. In addition to his involvement in the Pre-Law Program and other extracurricular activities, Bennett served as Student Government Senator for two years and SG Treasurer for a year. Patrick graduated from the University of North Florida in 2008 with a degree in political science.

Upon graduation from UNF, Patrick went on to attend the Florida State University College of Law in Tallahassee where he graduated Magna Cum Laude and was selected for membership in the Order of the Coif.

Currently, in addition to his role on the Duval County Soil and Water Conservation Board, Patrick serves as Assistant Vice President/Legal Counsel for Fidelity National Financial, a Fortune 500 company headquartered in Jacksonville.

When asked what advice he’d give to undergraduate students considering law school he said, “Get out of the classroom. Go and Do. Get involved in the legal process.” This is sage advice that we’ve heard from many alumni that are currently practicing law. Nothing can replace the value of hands-on experience in terms of paving your way into law school and laying the groundwork for your career after graduation.

We’d like to thank Patrick for his continued involvement in the Pre-Law Program and again congratulate him on his success.
Experience:
It doesn’t come from a law school textbook

By Jordan Coley, Esq.

What is the one thing employers are looking for that is not taught in a law school class? Experience. It is not a class you take, rather it is something you must go out and search for on your own. I fully believe that gaining hands on experience and exposure to the real life practice of law is invaluable to a law school student. In doing so, you will put yourself ahead of the game and stand out in a sea of resumes.

**GET EXPERIENCE!** I cannot stress this enough...get experience while you are in law school! Early on I knew I wanted to practice personal injury law. As soon as I felt somewhat-comfortable with law school life, I made it my goal to get real world experience. I got my resume together, interviewed, and was eventually offered a law clerk position at a local personal injury firm. I worked there for two years and learned more in that time then I ever expected. I soaked up every fact pattern, asked question after question, and probably annoyed my boss a little bit. But the tools I learned and understanding I gained helped me land my first job after I graduated. I had been exposed to real issues in real cases, and that is something law school does not always teach you.

If you are not sure what area of law you want to practice, that is perfectly fine, you do not have to have all the answers at once. Go out and get some familiarity in different areas of the law. Whether you do a summer internship, shadow several different attorneys, or do what I did and clerk at a firm, just do something! You need exposure to real law, not just the stuff they teach in Evidence and Property class (although that is important, too). Law firms want to hire new attorneys that have some hands-on knowledge. So I urge you, get experience, start early, and take on as much as you can. You will thank yourself later, I promise you!
As part of the UNF Pre-Law Endowed Lecture Series, on Thursday, November 6, 2014, the UNF Pre-Law Program was honored to welcome esteemed, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Carl Bernstein. Bernstein, a former journalist for *The Washington Post*, is perhaps most well-known for his involvement in exposing the Nixon-Watergate scandal with fellow journalist, Bob Woodward.

The Watergate Scandal was one of the most profound events in American history. It shaped our political landscape and even our vernacular – the name Watergate and the suffix “-gate” have become synonymous with major scandals and large scale breaches of the public trust ever since. The events that surrounded this raised the bar for ethics, transparency and accountability both in the White House and in journalism. It resulted in the indictment of nearly 70 people including many of President Richard Nixon’s top administrative officials, and culminated with Nixon’s resignation – the only American Presidential resignation to date.

It’s not very often that any of us, as individuals, has the opportunity to shape the course of history so dramatically, but that’s exactly what *Washington Post* investigative journalists Woodward and Bernstein did. The work of Woodward and Bernstein helped connect the break-in at the Watergate building with the Nixon administration and gave a unique window into the White House unlike any the American public had before. As a result of their hard-hitting, courageous journalism they and *The Washington Post* were awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Their book, *All the President’s Men*, in addition to being a classic bestseller, was turned into an academy-award winning, major motion picture with Robert Redford playing Woodward and Dustin Hoffman playing Bernstein.

However, Bernstein’s involvement in the politics of the American nation did not end there. Since Watergate, Bernstein has dedicated his career to continuing the work he began with Woodward, examining the use and abuse of power, not just in politics but in religion, finance, culture, and the media. He has written five best-selling books, including *His Holiness*, co-authored by Marco Politi, detailing the life and circumstances of Pope John Paul II; and his most recent
book, *A Woman In Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton*, which tells the personal and professional story of the former United States Secretary of State, US Senator, and First Lady, and has been acclaimed as the definitive biography of her life. Bernstein is also currently at work on several multi-media projects, including a feature film with director Steven Soderbergh and a TV drama about the US Congress. He's also a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair* and has been an on-air political analyst for CNN.

**Carl Bernstein on Campus**

In the afternoon of his day on campus, Bernstein spoke to a group of UNF students, staff and faculty and followed up with a lively question and answer session where he engaged his audience by not only thoughtfully and thoroughly answering what was asked, but by asking questions of the audience himself. Though most of the questions asked of him during the Q&A centered on Watergate, one student asked for his opinion on whether or not he believed Hillary Clinton would run for resident in 2016. Clinton was a leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in the 2008 election season and political analysts and correspondents strongly suspect that she’ll run again, including Bernstein. “I think she’s going to run. I think the odds are pretty great,” he said candidly.

In the evening, UNF hosted *An Evening with Carl Bernstein—The System Can Work: A Legendary Journalist Looks at America’s Government and Media from Watergate to the 21st Century*, where Bernstein presented an interesting, informative and thought provoking lecture. He talked about his childhood, his background in journalism and gave his thoughts on the role of the media today. Throughout his speech one theme rang clear, journalists and news media have a responsibility not to entertain, but to search ardently for “the best obtainable version of the truth”. He then followed this session with another engaging and warm Q&A. UNF was privileged to host one of the most influential journalists in modern American history. Bernstein’s time on our campus was a treat to all those who were able to participate. It was an exceptional and unique opportunity that would not have been possible without the hard work and generosity of the UNF Pre-Law Program and its Board of Advisors, and we are grateful to have been able to bring it to you.
Carl Bernstein:
The ever-present watch-dog

By Joseph Pike

Although his trip to the University of North Florida was about the current state of American journalism and politics, the famed journalist Carl Bernstein was able to spare a moment of his time to talk about something else that interests him—his son, Max Bernstein.

“Here, you want to see something?,” asked Carl Bernstein as he took out his iPhone and scrolled through it. “I think you’ll get a kick out of this.”

Bernstein pulled out a self-taken video of his son performing an impressive guitar solo in front of a roaring crowd.

“Watch the guitar player...that’s my son, Max, Demi Lovato’s guitar player,” he said.

Bernstein is a smart man. He was smart enough to help expose Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal, smart enough to write several best-selling books about the lives of both Hillary Clinton and the late Pope John Paul II, and smart enough to know that amidst all his great success his son’s guitar playing is important enough to share with strangers.

Bernstein visited UNF Friday, Nov. 7, and his lecture went beyond what initially brought him fame. His new contribution to academia focuses on both the decline of American journalism and the effects of ideologies on the political landscape.

Prior to the lecture, Bernstein set aside some time to meet with students and answer questions.

The Q&A

Many questions were about the infamous Watergate scandal, for which he and colleague Bob Woodward won a Pulitzer Prize in 1973. Bernstein answered these questions the way he has answered them a million times before, with a detailed account of the investigative tools it took to reveal the corruption in the Nixon administration.

“The Nixon Administration was a criminal presidency,” Bernstein said.

And while on the topic of presidencies, one of Bernstein’s main focuses in the session was on potential 2016 presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton.

“I think she’s going to run. I think the odds are pretty great,” Bernstein said.

Bernstein had several insights into the current state of American politics.
“Our political system is in terrible trouble. It’s not working,” he said. “One of the three branches of government, the Congress of the United States, is basically totally dysfunctional. Imagine: one of the three branches of the government doesn’t work.”

Bernstein’s Q&A was exceptionally personal, and a wonderful appetizer to his lecture at the Herbert University Center.

**The Lecture**

Carl Bernstein’s lecture was packed to the brim, and the crowd gave him a thunderous applause when he came on stage.

He began with an anecdotal story which related his personal life to the culture of UNF. The crowd fell silent as he described the ospreys that had nested in his home in Long Island, New York. Once he had everyone’s curiosity peaked, he began his oration on “the system” and the state of media culture.

“Truth has become the acceptance of untruths,” Bernstein said, addressing the younger generation and the production of the new media. “You’ve taken from the system and you’ve broken the system.”

And that was the whole point of Bernstein’s lecture, wrapped and delivered for anyone who is willing to listen.

The system, which Bernstein subtly defines as the media acting as a watchdog for society, has fallen due to sloppy reporting and an unnatural focus on gossip and “manufactured controversy.”

When Bernstein began working at his first job at the *Washington Star* at age 16, journalists understood what it meant to provide a service to the public. That service was to report accurately and on subjects that could benefit society—a skill that Bernstein feels has become a rarity in the field today.

The rest of his lecture was riddled with questions from an eager audience, which Bernstein was more than willing to satisfy with his distinctive sense of humor, even once admitting that his response was a, “long answer to a short question.”

The crowd snickered with approval.

At the end of his lecture, Bernstein’s confident voice delivered one last important message that will hopefully remain with all who heard it. According to Bernstein journalism is essentially about “the best obtainable version of the truth,” and that the system can be fixed if the younger generation is able to find what it means to work for the common good like the generations before them.

*Gallery photos by Robert Curtis.*

*Article and photos originally appeared in the UNF Spinnaker at unfspinnaker.com. Reprinted with permission.*
On Thursday, January 22, 2015, the Pre-Law Program held this year’s first of three Pre-Law Forums. For the first time at UNF, we were able to host admissions personnel from Frederic G. Levin College of Law at the University of Florida. Ian McInnis, Associate Director of Admissions spoke to a room full of students alongside Noemar Castro, Director of Admissions, offering a wealth of knowledge and invaluable advice regarding the law school admissions process at University of Florida.

While there are some things that all law schools have in common in regards to their admissions requirements, it’s worth noting that each school does have their own specific set of criteria for applicants, as well. Below are some highlights and bullet points from just a few of the topics Mr. McInnis and Mrs. Castro covered.

**LSAT Score and GPA:**
- The median LSAT score of the most recent incoming class was 158
- The median GPA was 3.5
- The latest LSAT score they’ll accept is the scoring from the February exam, otherwise you’ll have to wait to apply one extra year
- UF Law only starts new law classes in the Fall, there is no Spring Admission
- UF Law does not penalize you for taking the LSAT more than once, and they do not average your score.
- They take your best score, but all scores/attempts to take the exam are visible, so if you are retaking the exam to improve a previous score, take a moment in your Addendums (see below) to talk about what happened.

**Academic (vs. Personal) Statement:**
- This is NOT a Personal Statement
- This should be 4 pages in length
- Do not submit less than 4 pages
- Should focus on your academic career and skills you learned while as an undergrad or graduate student (nothing from before college)
- Any experience you have with research and writing should be highlighted
- Details about what this statement should include can be found on UF Law website or in their Viewbook (also on the website).
- You should always thoroughly research and read the requirements of each application for the law schools to which you are applying and follow them closely.
Optional Diversity Essay:
- This is your “personal” statement
- Use this to talk about who you are as a person and what makes you unique
- Should be 2 pages in length

Resume:
- You may include more than one
- If you have one academic CV and one professional, that’s perfectly acceptable
- Does not need to be limited to a single page
- Don’t dumb down the information
- If it takes 2 or even 3 pages to accurately provide detail about your relevant skills and abilities, then take the time and do that
SIDE NOTE: Internships:
- Only matter if they add to your skills (regardless of *where* you interned)
- If you were pouring coffee all day 5 days a week at a law firm, that’s not going to say anything about your skills and abilities

Letters of Recommendation:
- Are not required (but are strongly suggested)
- Are NOT character references
- They assume that you got this far and thusly have good character. This is an opportunity to have your employers or professors discuss things such as:
  - Work ethic
  - Skills learned and used at your job
  - Morale
- Ask someone who knows you and has an existing relationship with you to write the letter
- The better the person knows you, the more their letter can help you, because they can be specific
- No more than 4 letters will be accepted

Addendums:
- This is where you can add things that may be relevant to your file but are not appropriate to include with the other documents.
- LSAT – if you had to retake the exam, talk about that here. What happened the first time? How did you go about improving your score?
- GPA – if there are extenuating circumstances that would explain a less than desirable GPA, talk about that here. Did you have a rough semester? Did you switch majors and have a tough time catching up? Did you move or transfer? Were you working full time or raising kids while you went to school? Talk about those things. Otherwise, they may just assume you partied hard as a freshman and spent some time making up for that.
**Other points:**

- **Holistic and Comparative:**
  - Your file is looked at as a whole package, no part is singled out, so remember the more (quality) information you include, the better.
  - It’s also compared to all the other files they’ve received, so remember to present yourself in the best way possible and talk about what makes you an asset.

- **Scholarships and Financial Aid**
  - Every student is considered for Merit Based Scholarships, and they will be awarded with your admissions letter. If you have received a Merit Based Scholarship from another law school, include that information in your addendums.
  - Needs Based Scholarships and Financial Aid will be based on your FAFSA
  - Deadline to apply is March 15
  - But don’t wait!!! They start sending out acceptance letters as early as November and through late April, the sooner you get your packet in, the better
  - If you send in your packet but you’re waiting on a second LSAT score or other relevant information, include a note about that in the addendum and they’ll set your file aside and review it when the rest of your information comes in.

Your UF Law School application should be an **“Information Rich Environment”**. That means, the more information you can include, the better. This point was stressed repeatedly. The UF Law Admissions department does not conduct personal interviews, so if there’s something you think they need to know, include it. That being said, you should exercise judgment.

They will be evaluating your **judgment** and **attention to detail** through the presentation of the information in your file. Did you include the information in the proper place? For example, including “personal” and “personality” type information in your Academic Statement would demonstrate a lack of judgment. Did you proof read the documents in your files? Get a friend to help, or better yet, go to Career Services or hire a professional to assist you.

Finally, Mr. McInnis encourages all applicants to not only visit UF Law, but all the law schools you have applied to (or at least been admitted to). McInnis says, “It is important to make sure you feel comfortable in the environment you will be spending countless hours and three years of your life in.”
The COAS Political Science and Public Administration department, and the Pre-Law Program, are happy to announce the return of Soul of the Court in Summer 2015. This popular course has been taught both at UNF and at Florida Coastal School of Law by Mr. Edwards and will introduce the student to the varying judicial philosophies in conflict in contemporary American society, with a special emphasis on the battle for control of the philosophical composition and direction of the United States Supreme Court.

The course will commence with a historical overview of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and a brief study of the influences upon the Founding Fathers who created the Constitution.

A historical analysis of the nineteenth century in terms of politics, economics, and other factors will be discussed in relation to the evolving history of the Supreme Court. This analysis will include the battles over Presidential nominations to the Court, and its ever-expanding role in determining the direction of the law. The discussion will focus on the role the United States Senate has played in the confirmation process. Some major Supreme Court decisions from this period will be reviewed.

Some emphasis will be placed on the historical factors which led up to the composition of the Warren Court and how that Court helped shaped contemporary society by its activist interpretation of the Constitution. One major thrust of the course will fo-
Focus on the hotly-contested battle for the nomination of Robert Bork to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court in 1987. The battle over the Bork nomination contains a historical overview of the political, social, economic, and public interest forces which came into conflict over this highly-controversial figure. An in-depth study of the Bork nomination will assist the student in understanding how nominations to the High Court became highly political in the twentieth century. All aspects of the Bork nomination and subsequent confirmation hearings will be studied to enlighten the student about the political process interacting with philosophical forces in the fight to control the future direction of the Court.

Also discussed, in less detail, will be the nomination and confirmation battle over Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court in 1991. This will update the continuing saga of the political process and players attempting to shape the future of the Supreme Court, and how each major political party learned from the Bork experience and approached the Thomas hearing from different perspectives.

Subsequent appointments to the Court will be reviewed. The elevation of Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the Court in 1993 and the appointment of Steven Bryer in 1994 will lead to a brief discussion of the implications created by these appointments, the role they have played in maintaining a strong Court center, and how they provide balance for future decision-making of the Supreme Court. The elevation of Chief Justice John Roberts as new Chief Justice, the confirmation of Samuel Alito to the Court, and the possible reshaping of constitutional law will also be discussed in context with the future direction of the court. A brief review of the newest additions to the Court, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagen, will be conducted.

Some predictions may be offered concerning the future direction of the Court and what major issues the Court will address in the near future and how changes in the make-up of the Court might affect the future direction of constitutional law.
It has been stated that the presentation of a case in a courtroom setting is both a science and an art. An attorney’s adherence to and application of various legal rules, legal procedure, and practice constitute the science of the law. The attorney’s adaptation of trial strategies, tactics, and techniques constitute the art of the law. Every trial litigator utilizes a "system" which enhances the preparation and presentation of a case in court.

This course presents a systematic approach to the planning, preparation, and presentation of a case for trial. As an overview, the student must conduct a case analysis, which provides the initial source of facts and legal theories associated with the case. The student must then learn a systematic approach to trial preparation. The theories supporting the case must be tested against the existing facts and law of the case. These must be further tested within the context of the procedural rules. This is the initial structure of the case preparation.

The course will commence with an overview of the importance of the litigation system as viewed by the Founding Fathers and the integral role counsel plays within that system. The student will learn the various roles played by the lawyer who tries cases in court. An assortment of Judges, lawyers and others serve as guest speakers to give the students a “real-life” look at the justice system and practice of law. A second phase will be the introduction of pre-trial strategy and the development of a case theme, the theory of the client’s case. As this is developed trial strategy will emerge. A major portion of the course will then delve into the various aspects of the jury trial.

Throughout the course, each student will be afforded opportunities to practice the techniques that constitute the art of the law. Some students will present opening statements to the class, others will conduct direct and cross examination of witnesses, and some students will deliver final arguments. Students will practice and deliver in front of class most of the fact patterns that come from scenarios created by the class instructor. Each student will be required to make at least one presentation before the class.

At the conclusion of the course and depending upon students’ performance and initiative during class, students may have the opportunity to conduct a full trial before a real judge at a time and place to be determined, but not during assigned class time.
Mock Trial was by far my favorite class I took at UNF. This was the one class where I was surrounded by students who loved the law as much as I did. In Mock Trial, we were required to “perform” multiple times throughout the 8 week course, putting our lectures and reading to practice! We were given the opportunity to get firsthand experience in Opening Statements, Cross and Direct Examination, and Closing Statements, as well as given advice by practicing attorneys. In addition, nearly every class had a guest speaker who lectured on particular areas of our legal career. In my class, we were lucky enough to hear from Attorney Robert Spohrer and County Judge Eleni Derke, as well as numerous local attorneys and law students (who gave excellent advice on LSAT prep & applying to law schools). I only wish more students had the opportunity to take Mock Trial!

--Alex Brown, Class of 2013

I enrolled in the Political Science degree program with the intention of going on to law school afterwards. Since trial advocacy was my primary motive for wanting to become an attorney, the Mock Trial course was a natural step towards achieving that goal. Public speaking hasn’t come to me any easier than it has for most people, but I’ve found that my fear and anxiety of public speaking has been significantly reduced with every time I attempt it. It is for this reason that I actively seek out opportunities to present or speak in public. This class was not only an additional opportunity to develop my public speaking abilities, but one specifically tailored to those who are contemplating a future as contenders in the adversarial process. My participation in the Mock Trial class gave me confidence not only in my public speaking abilities, but also in my decision to become an attorney. If you’re even tinkering with the idea of attending three years of law school, then I strongly encourage you to take this course.

---Brandon Fortuno, Class of 2014
Read your personal statement to your mother, and she may be moved to tears; read the same essay to an admissions officer, and she may cry for other reasons. When drafting your personal statement, be sure to keep your audience in mind.

Wake Up Your Audience

Wake them from their semi-catatonic state with a dynamic opening. For a sizeable chunk of the year, admissions officers read essays all day long, all week long, all month long. Nonetheless, your opening paragraph must engage them and make them want to read further.

For example, let’s say problem solving is a talent you want to demonstrate in your statement. Rather than merely telling the reader that you are a “great problem solver” and have known “since you were five-years-old” that you wanted to become a lawyer, paint a scene instead:

We must have inadvertently fallen asleep on the train, because where my bag had been pressed firmly between my ankles, now there was nothing but a humid breeze. Arriving in Algeria without a phone, money, or any form of identification, I refused to dwell on prison scenes from my late-night movie watching. Instead, I quickly began to formulate a plan.

By selecting a particular problem you have faced, and using it to demonstrate your problem solving skills, you are more likely to engage your reader. This opening narrative, just like every word of your essay, should be truthful and interesting, should highlight your best qualities, and should make the reader want to learn more about you.

Can You Prove It?

Just as the admissions officer isn’t likely to be moved by
an essay that reminisces about how you earned your scouting badge, he isn’t going to believe that you possess the positive qualities that you profess unless you prove it to him. That’s right, the officer will read with a critical eye, as well he should. After all, with this application, you will be asking for a coveted seat in a law school classroom. So, if you want the reader to believe that you are a critical thinker, a social activist, or a born leader, prove it by example, with a vignette from your life or an outcome you have achieved.

Make It Personal

Your personal statement should be personal—that is, it should not be about your brother’s criminal case, your mother’s business, your camp buddy’s autism, or your best friend’s adoption. If you were deeply influenced by one of these experiences, certainly, the subject could play a role in your personal statement. However, the purpose of telling a story should be to demonstrate how the experience affected you—how it changed your thinking, how it shaped you, or better yet, how it compelled you to take action and get involved.

So, regardless of the story you tell, your statement must be about you. It should prove to the admissions officers that you would be an invaluable addition to their incoming class.

Don’t Sensationalize

For some applicants, it makes sense to discuss difficult life experiences in their personal statement. If you choose this avenue, be sure to show the reader how the experience has helped to shape your character or has given rise to your interest in law. In short, discussing sensitive experiences makes sense only if they are directly relevant to your application.

Get the Help You Need

Get the help you need to do it right. A personal statement can go from “great” to “garbage” if it contains grammatical or typographical errors. When poring over your own written work (that’s right, poring, not pouring—would you know the difference?), it’s easy to miss errors that admissions officers are trained to catch. Ensure that your personal statement is free of
grammatical and typographical errors by asking a trusted friend, family member, or mentor to review your work, or by hiring someone to assist you.

**Easier Said Than Done**

Writing about yourself is hard to do well. Force yourself to brainstorm about your experiences, to conduct free writing sessions, and to outline. This should be done formally—put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. While your cardio workout may help to spark a great idea, *thinking about* your statement isn’t the same as *getting started*. As soon as possible, start typing. Most students dramatically underestimate the time it will take to draft a quality personal statement. While no one can tell you exactly how long it will take you to draft, revise, and complete your statement, think in terms of weeks, not hours.

Lisa De Sanctis is the owner and founder of local editing service, *Word It Wisely LLC*. Lisa offers law school applicants one-on-one consulting and editing services.

Lisa is a graduate of the University of California’s Berkeley Law, ranked 9th in the country, according to the most recent rankings by U.S. News and World Report. She began her career as a prosecutor and went on to work in legal academia. Lisa has served as a Professor of Clinical Law at George Washington University School of Law and as a Senior Career Advisor at University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. Locally, Lisa has served as a Bar Coach to recent graduates of Florida Coastal School of Law (FCSL) and has assisted FCSL’s Career Services Office in administering a post-graduate employment grant program.

To work directly with Lisa on your personal statement, call Word It Wisely LLC at 855-888-EDIT or visit [www.worditwisely.com](http://www.worditwisely.com) to complete a contact form.
Law School Personal Statement

As part of the application, prospective law students will often be asked to submit an application letter and/or personal essay. These statements serve multiple purposes: they introduce the student to the admission committee, present the student’s individual strengths, demonstrate the student’s writing ability and convey a sense of uniqueness and individuality. These statements are a direct reflection on the student’s abilities and qualifications for attending law school and should be carefully prepared and presented.

Every person’s letter or essay will be unique, but there are some general guidelines in preparing a personal essay or admission letter:

Appearance matters
This statement is the primary contact between you as the applicant and the admission committee. You should use high quality materials and the final product should be of professional quality. Do not use bold or brightly colored paper or ink, the presentation should be of professional quality. Mistakes are unforgivable, so proofread carefully. If possible, present the letter to a friend, family member or advisor to critique and review. Unless the letter and/or essay is a general one which is presented to the LSDAS, tailor it to the individual school, including specifically addressing it to the committee/persons indicated on the application.

Length matters
Consult the schools’ application materials for specifications on the proper length and format of these statements. Where no criteria are specified, the rule of thumb is that the letter or personal essay should not exceed two pages (single spaced) in length. Statements beyond a certain length will not be carefully or fully read. Use also a reasonable font size, type set (avoid hard to read fonts which have the appearance of script).

Content matters
Your letter/essay should be a direct, clearly written and cogent explanation of your qualifications and suitability for a legal career. The essay is an opportunity to emphasize your individual strengths and to offer some insight to you as a person. Some individuals will include a brief biography, or convey a story which illustrates their reasons for pursuing a legal career, including examples of adversities overcome or past success in meeting life’s challenges. Many effective essays are provocative, even bold efforts designed to capture the attention of the committee. The style you choose and the information you relate should reflect your personality and ambitions. You should also attempt to tailor the admission letter and/or essay to emphasize information
relevant to each school. While it is acceptable to be unique or to share personal information, avoid being “gimmicky,” or including overly personal or sensitive information that might be considered inappropriate. Remember there is a fine line between provocative and outlandish – avoid going for “shock value.”

You may also want to use the essay as a means of mitigating some weakness in the application. While it is not wise to draw attention to one’s deficiencies, you may take the opportunity to buttress the application by emphasizing improvement in your record or explaining any weakness of performance that may have resulted from a crisis or a troubled period. In general, the statement should be confident and direct without falsely embellishing or misrepresenting your record. The LSAC’s “Ofﬁcial Guide to U.S. Law Schools, (2001 Edition)” says the following about personal essays:

Each candidate to law school has something of interest to present. Maybe you’ve had some experience, some training, some dream that sets you apart from the others. Law schools want to recruit men and women who are qualiﬁed for reasons beyond grades and scores. The essay or personal statement in your application is the place to tell the committee about yourself.

In general your evaluation of actual experiences and past accomplishments has more value to the committee than speculation about future accomplishments. Also, if you have overcome a serious obstacle in your life to get where you are today, by all means let the admission committee know about it. Any noteworthy personal experience or accomplishment may be an appropriate subject for your essay; however be sure to do more than just state it. Describe your experience brieﬂy but concretely, and why it had value to you, whether it is a job, your family, a significant accomplishment, or your upbringing. You are simultaneously trying to add information and create structure. Be brief, be factual, be comprehensive, and be organized.

You are a story teller here. You want a living person – you – to emerge. The statement is your opportunity to be vivid and alive to the reader, and it is an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to write and present a prose sample in a professional manner).
With a wide array of resource materials including a variety of study aids and advice materials on everything from LSAT prep, letters of recommendation to information on the first year of law school, the Pre-Law Program Resource Center is a great way for students to learn about law school and to prepare for all aspects of law school admission for free.

**LSAT Study Resources**

Take the time to practice and prepare!

Email the Pre-Law Program at a.kalafatis@unf.edu to borrow study material from the Resource Center.

It's free and is a great starting point for your law school preparation needs.

You can also get in touch with the Pre-Law Student Society to see about upcoming LSAT study groups.

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**Do I need to take a LSAT Prep Course to do well on the LSAT?**

Arizona State University PreLaw answered this question: “Approximately 40% of law school applicants have taken a commercial prep course. Students who have taken them report that such courses do familiarize you with the format of the test and reduce your test anxiety. These students also report significant improvement in test scores. If you choose to take one of these courses, take it as near to the time of the actual test as possible. Commercial prep courses are not going to harm you. On the other hand, if you have real discipline, they do not do anything for you that you cannot do for yourself.”

Boston College in *EIGHT COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE LSAT*, discusses the second misconception stating “The LSAT is biased against test takers who cannot afford expensive coaching courses.” In rebuttal, it is stated that “the difference in mean LSAT scores between those who did and those who did not take a commercial course is about 1 point on the 120-180 LSAT score scale.”

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**Some of the commercial LSAT prep courses available** *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TestMasters</td>
<td>1-800-696-5728; <a href="http://www.testmasters.net">www.testmasters.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ace Test Preparation</td>
<td>1-801-318-3051; <a href="http://www.ace180.com/lsat.php">www.ace180.com/lsat.php</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackstone LSAT Prep</td>
<td>1-800-881-LSAT; <a href="http://www.blackstone-lsat.com">www.blackstone-lsat.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside LSAT</td>
<td>1-888-750-LSAT; <a href="http://www.OutsideLSAT.com">www.OutsideLSAT.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton Review</td>
<td>1-800-2review; <a href="http://www.preincetonreview.com">www.preincetonreview.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Score</td>
<td>1-800-545-1750; <a href="http://www.powerscore.com">www.powerscore.com</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* The Pre-Law Program does not endorse or recommend any commercial LSAT prep course.
Plan It Out: a timeline for law school admissions

Fall of Junior Year

- Attend UNF Pre-Law Day in the Fall
- Attend UNF Pre-Law Forum in the Spring
- Begin studying for the LSAT (study for at least 3-5 months in advance of test)
- Register for June LSAT, if ready
- Request letters of recommendation (LOR)
- Begin researching law schools, asking about each school’s median LSAT score, important application dates, and requirements for LORs, and the personal statement.
- Order official transcripts
- Make sure LORs are submitted
- Finalize personal statement
- Take October LSAT if necessary
- If possible complete & send applications at the beginning of the application cycle or no later than Thanksgiving to take advantage of rolling admissions & early decision

Fall of Senior Year

- Take LSAT in June, if ready
- Check the status of your LORs
- Begin writing Personal Statement; speak to Program Director Edwards about help with your Personal Statement
- Review law school choices once LSAT scores come in
- If necessary, register for October LSAT
- Contact law schools to see if applications are complete
- Complete and submit financial aid information
- Evaluate admissions offers
- Thank your letter writers and inform them of your plans

Personal Statement

- Personal Statements vary according to law school: The University of Florida, for instance, requests students submit an “Academic Statement” in addition to a short “Diversity Statement.” Other schools like students to tell unique personal stories. Check with each law school for specific guidelines.
- Ask for help writing and editing your statement: Ask the Pre-Law Program Director about resources for assistance with your Personal and/or Academic Statement.

Letters of Recommendation

- Ask early: Students often ask too late into the semester for letters of recommendation, long after professors have already agreed to write letters for other students.
- Ensure good letters: Ask professors who have instructed you in multiple classes and ones who know you academically. A professor from a class in which you performed poorly would not necessarily be the best writer of your letter regardless of their prestige.

Law School Admissions Test

- Pick a goal: Find out from law schools their LSAT ranges to help you decide what you goal should be
- Study Effectively: Create a weekly/daily study plan and stick to it.
- Stay Calm: Don’t let nerves hurt your performance

Resume

- Get involved: Volunteer, work or join a club and stick to it; law schools know when you’re really interested and when you’re just filling a resume
- Talk to the school: some law schools look favorably on certain extracurricular activities; figure this out early in your academic career