

Gaining Experience as a Pre-Law Student

It is always advantageous to get exposure to the work environment, explore your interests, gain skills, and build your professional network. This can help you figure out if a legal career is a good fit for as well as build out your resume for law school. Here are four ways to approach getting experience as a pre-law undergraduate student:

Legal Exposure

Most "legal" internships are offered to 1L and 2L law students in law school. If you are looking to gain legal exposure as an undergraduate, your chances of finding an internship are higher if you look at positions that are more clerical and administrative based. Sometimes, this may come in the form of volunteering or informational interviews with legal professionals. It is important to note that you are gaining exposure and this is a great starting point in understanding what goes on in the day-to-day life of a lawyer in a work setting. While internships are not a requirement to apply or be accepted by law schools, they are beneficial and highly encouraged.

Area of Interest

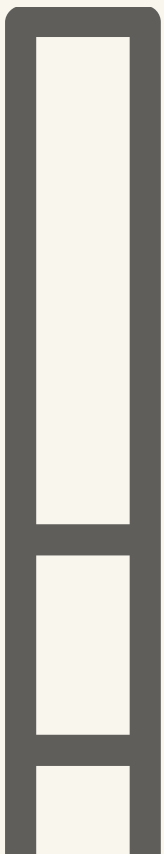
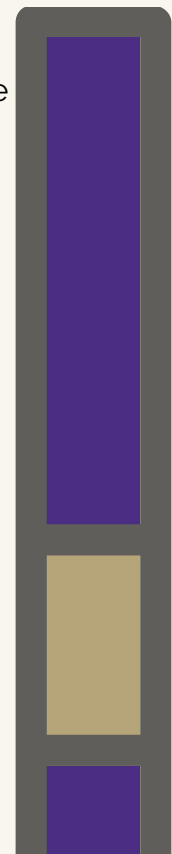
Not all internships have to be in a legal setting. They can be more related to your broader area of interest. For example: If a student is interested in becoming an immigration lawyer, they may consider getting an internship at a non-profit or organization that works with immigrants. Though there may not be a legal aspect to the internship, the student is gaining valuable skills and experiences working directly with the population, policies, and work they want to pursue. In addition, the student is furthering their learning and commitment to public service, which may inform the type of law school and program they wish to attend.

Skills

The American Bar Association (ABA) lists the following core skills, values, knowledge, and experiences students can acquire before law school. Having these core skills can be a good foundation for your future legal education and work.

- Problem Solving
- Critical Reading
- Writing and Editing
- Oral Communication and Listening
- Research
- Organization and Management
- Public Service and Promotion of Justice
- Relationship-building & Collaboration
- Background Knowledge
- Exposure to the Law

Be intentional in choosing an internship, whether legal or not, that will provide you some experience, training, and opportunities to gain and practice these skills.



Networking

Building a network is an important part of a student's educational and professional success. Ways you can network as a pre-law student include emailing lawyers and inviting them for informational interviews (LinkedIn is a great tool for this), attending and introducing yourself at law school fairs and events, and participating in pre-law related groups (UW Phi Alpha Delta). During your internship, challenge yourself to talk to as many people as you can. Ask these folks about their job and their experience with law school.

Tips:

- Search: Handshake, Job and Internship Fairs, Idealist, Indeed, and LinkedIn
- Check out <https://careers.uw.edu/internships/>
- UW's Law Societies and Justice (LSJ) major has a comprehensive list of internships that their students have done in the past (<https://lsj.washington.edu/internship-requirement#recent>)
- Some majors will allow you to earn credit for the demonstrated learning associated with an internship. Contact your departmental advisor to inquire if this can be done or look into GEN ST 250 for credit
- The Washington State Legislature offers a Legislative Internship Program to juniors and seniors where interns will spend winter quarter working in Olympia with staff as members of the Washington State House of Representatives or Senate
- Volunteer at non-profits, public interest organizations, legal clinics, and legal aid offices. Visit the King County Bar Association website and look under 'Volunteer Opportunities'
- Consider getting a legal job as a file clerk, paralegal, or legal assistant during school or after graduation
- Other ways you can gain exposure and skills outside of doing an internship include joining a UW RSO, service learning with the Carlson Leadership & Public Service Center, student employment, taking on various leadership roles, research, taking various classes where these skills are practiced/learned, writing for the UW Daily, shadowing/informational interviews with attorneys, and volunteering
- Make an appointment on Handshake to speak with a pre-law career coach



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