
Chapter 6: Opportunities in Law for Minority Men and Women

■ A Career in Law for Minority Group Members

The legal profession is cognizant of the minority exclusion and underrepresentation that has historically pervaded American society. The legal system, which greatly values and benefits from multicultural perspectives, acknowledges the importance of diverse legal representation. A law career provides a singular opportunity to effect change both on an individual level—by representing the interests of a client—and on a global level—by setting policy or establishing a precedent in the governmental or business arenas.

Although minority participation in law school and the legal profession has increased over the last three decades, more can and is being done to attract minority men and women to the profession. Outreach efforts by the legal system can and do counteract the shortage of minority lawyers. So does the realization on the part of minority men and women that law can be a rewarding and fulfilling career.

DiscoverLaw.org Campaign

The Law School Admission Council developed the DiscoverLaw.org campaign to encourage racially and ethnically diverse students to discover career opportunities in law in their first and second year of undergraduate school. Discovering law early in your career exploration makes it easier to choose a path that will lead you to a law degree. Even if you're still in high school or just beginning college, there are steps you can take now to be successful if you do decide to apply. For more information for high school and first- and second-year undergraduates, register at DiscoverLaw.org.

Acquiring a Legal Education

Individual law schools and legal organizations have worked hard to ensure continued progress toward alleviating the historic shortage of minority lawyers. For example, the Law School Admission Council established a Diversity Committee, which thus far has spent in excess of \$5 million on projects designed to increase the number of minority men and women who attend law schools. The American Bar Association adopted a law school standard calling for specific commitments to provide full opportunities for members of minority groups. The Association of American Law Schools also requires that member schools provide full opportunities in legal education for minorities and has programs to increase the number of minority faculty.

A legal education can provide you with considerable opportunity. You will have spent approximately three years thinking critically, reading broadly, and debating forcefully, and these skills are worthwhile in most everything you do.

Admission to Law School

Admission to law school is competitive—sometimes very competitive. However, getting into law school may be less difficult than you expect. Because there are many law schools and varied admission requirements, it is advisable for you to do sufficient research and be selective. Read and reread the information in this book and study law school catalogs.

Get advice from as many people as you can, including a prelaw advisor, an academic counselor, a diversity program director, and a practicing lawyer.

Let the law schools you have selected know that you are interested. Often a school will have a specific program, a minority organization, designated personnel, or a law student to provide assistance for minority applicants.

Don't be intimidated by the law school admission process. The schools take all aspects of candidates' applications into account when they evaluate them. Personal and educational background are considered, as are undergraduate records, LSAT scores, and letters of recommendation. It is to your advantage to include information on your racial or ethnic identity (even if not requested on the application); such information helps to present a complete picture of you. Similarly, interesting life experiences and past employment experiences also count.

For information on the number and percentages of specific minority students and specific minority faculty at ABA-approved law schools, consult the individual school data pages and "Key Facts for Minority Law School Applicants" on the following pages.

Once You Are in Law School

Once you are in law school, you will encounter a difficult but manageable academic program. Most law schools offer academic assistance to students who encounter difficulties while in law school. Very often minority student groups will advise, assist, and support newcomers. Most minority students perform successfully in law school; they are also able to make effective use of their law degrees, whether practicing law or following other career avenues.

For more information on opportunities in law for minority men and women, go to our website, LSAC.org/diversity.