

Career Connections

Law

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

The Law Career Connections program offers students a means to explore the field of law and its career possibilities. This Career Connections program will help you obtain information and guidance in deciding whether a career in law best suits you and in preparing you for admission to law school.

Law is a demanding profession that requires dedication and perseverance, and the work can be stressful and time consuming. Law also rewards its practitioners with interesting and challenging problems to be solved and the satisfaction of serving their clients well. Competition is high for entrance into fine law schools, and establishing oneself as an attorney can be difficult, yet there is always work for lawyers. The popular image of the lawyer is of the advocate declaiming in the courtroom, but lawyers and other legal professionals do much more. Laws affect every aspect of our complex society, and social and political developments, economic growth, and globalization keep the profession lively and changing. As a result, the legal profession encompasses a wide variety of occupations in both the private and public sectors. Lawyers are active in business and commercial affairs, labor law, consumer protection, environmental issues, health and medical concerns, family law, planning wills and estates, intellectual property disputes, and in international and global affairs. In addition to attending to these professional concerns, lawyers hold a place of esteem in society, and they are often expected to serve their communities by assuming important responsibilities in public affairs.

The best foundation for anyone pursuing a life in law is a liberal arts education. As it enables you to analyze and think critically, to construct sound interpretations, and to write persuasively, the liberal arts cultivates the broad interests and sharp and agile minds that lawyers need to deal with the various and complex issues of modern times. This Career Connections program, then, is a guide for those interested in knowing whether and how they might apply their educational boon in the field of law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Exploring Options

Beginning with their first semester of law school, students are often reminded that Law is a profession that requires considerable personal commitment, time, and effort. As you explore the process of becoming a lawyer, seriously consider whether a life in law would suit your interests, temperament, and values. Contact one of the faculty advisors on Hanover College's pre-law committee. They can discuss with you the challenges of law school and the legal profession. They can also assist you with suggestions for planning course work and for preparing to apply to and succeed in law school. Consult with those who have experienced law school to learn about the academic and personal demands and rewards of law. Many Hanover graduates go on to law

school, so there are alumni in different stages of their educations and careers. The Career Center can assist you in finding alumni contacts who are either currently enrolled in law school or have their degrees and can offer advice and information. You may also be able to arrange to “shadow” a lawyer through their day to get a sense of the duties, demands, and stresses of the profession.

In addition to providing contact assistance, the Career Center has many other resources that will be useful as you explore the legal profession. The Center has a variety of books on the LSAT, law schools, and law-related career paths, including titles such as *LSAT Success*, *The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools*, *Careers in Focus: Law*, and *What Can You Do With a Law Degree?* You can also request that the Career Center’s staff print a SIGI 3 report, which offers concise information about the profession, including a description of work activities, educational requirements, personal qualifications, required skills, challenges associated with the profession, salaries, employment outlook, institutional addresses to write for more information, and other useful material.

Academics

Although there has been a tradition for certain disciplines to be thought the most appropriate “pre-law” majors, in fact, any liberal arts major provides an appropriate foundation for those pursuing a career in law. A liberal arts education provides the knowledge, skills, and ways of understanding the world that enable students to succeed in law school and the profession. Modern society and its concerns have become so complex that specialized knowledge and expertise in a particular discipline is an advantage to lawyers who wish to practice in a particular field. At the same time, however, a lawyer needs to have an exposure to many fields and be able to comprehend and identify the main points at issue.

Hanover’s curriculum is designed to strengthen characteristics essential to practitioners of law. It offers a broad and rich education that sharpens important skills such as critical thinking, writing, and speaking; it challenges students to consider moral and ethical questions, historical change and its consequences, and current social and political issues; it inspires a deeper appreciation of arts and culture; and it encourages students to make connections among the disciplines. In our increasingly global society, the study of a second language is particularly appropriate for those interested in law. You may choose to take one or more elective courses that have legal themes, such as:

- Phi 237. Ethics: Theory and Practice
- Phi 321. Formal Logic
- Phi 331. Philosophy of Law;
- PIS 215. American Political Thought
- PIS 222. U.S. Legislative Process
- PIS 232. The Problem of Order: Law, Politics
- PIS 326. Constitutional Law
- PIS 321. Natural Resources Policy
- PIS 331. International Law and Organizations; and
- Soc 226. Law and Society

Co-Curricular Activities

Co-curricular activities offer students opportunities to develop the habits, values, and skills useful to practicing law. These include habits of service and concern for others; values such as persistence and competitiveness and skills such as attention to detail, persuasiveness, effective reasoning, and successful negotiation. Given the demands of any occupation, including the practice of law, other extracurricular activities – art, music, and sports – are important for relieving stress and maintaining one’s well-being.

On-Campus Activities

Resident advising and peer advising requires thoughtful and effective interaction with others. Service in the Student Senate and the Student Activities Budgeting Committee, for example, calls for making difficult decisions in allocating funds. The Student Programming Board and Campus Awareness and Service Committee organize events of community interest. The Greek Standards Board and Greek Accountability Board respectively adjudicate and monitor chapter violations. Writing opinion pieces for the *Triangle* sharpens your skills at persuasive argument. You might be chosen to serve as student members of a faculty committee, such as the Faculty Evaluation Committee or Curriculum Committee, or complete a Community Service Internship in the Student Life Office.

Hanover’s Pre-law Club provides you with the opportunity to meet with other students also exploring Law. The club arranges visits to law schools to observe classes, talk with attorneys, law students, and judges. Hanover students who have had law internships quite often discuss their internship experiences with the club. The club has also offered practice LSAT.

Off-Campus Activities

The culture of the legal profession has long encouraged lawyers to use their knowledge, expertise, and leadership qualities in service to the community. Volunteering for community groups such as the United Way, the Chamber of Commerce, Habitat for Humanity, and Big Brothers / Big Sisters is a good way to develop such habits of service and to gain experience working as a member of an organization.

Work Experience

Although law schools do not require or emphasize related work experience in admissions, it can enable you to practice responsible work habits, gain self-understanding and insight into the field, develop writing, communicating, and interpersonal skills, and make acquaintances in the profession who might be able to assist you when you apply for clerkships while in law school.

On-Campus Jobs

You may find a campus job that allows you to polish important skills, such as writing and research, in the Learning Center as a tutor, or as a research assistant for a faculty member.

Related Summer Jobs

Working in a law office, especially one that handles a variety of cases, can give students a sense of how law practice varies across specialties, and can give them a chance to have longer term interactions than shadowing allows. It should be recognized, however, that most of these summer jobs are for messengers or receptionists.

Internships

Hanover students have had valuable educational experiences through internships with various practitioners of law. Internships might be arranged, for instance, with judges, law firms, county prosecutors' offices, and advocacy organizations. Recent Hanover students have interned under the direction of Judge Todd, Fifth Judicial Circuit Court Judge; Laufman & Gerhardstein, Civil Rights Attorneys; Clark County and Jefferson County Prosecutors' offices; and United States District Court, Southern Indiana. Of particular note is the close relationship Hanover College has with The Washington Center and The Philadelphia Center. Both semester-long programs are internship-based, offering opportunities in every aspect of law. Students have interned for the Public Defender's Office, District Attorney Offices, US Supreme Court, Legal Aid Society, Children's Law Center, and the Office of Attorney General. To learn more about these or other internship options, contact the Career Center.

You can gain useful experience and insight into the profession from your on-site internship supervisor, and you may earn course credit if you meet certain criteria. Your supervisor may also provide you with a letter of reference to law school.

(last revised 10/2009)