

Columbia University School of Law

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THE BASICS

Columbia University School of Law was formally established in 1858, approximately 65 years after Columbia College began offering law classes to such students as Alexander Hamilton, author of *The Federalist Papers*, and John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The school was accredited by the ABA in 1923 and is one of the oldest law schools in the United States.

The school is located in the Morningside Heights neighborhood of New York City (about 20 minutes from downtown Manhattan), on the edge of the Columbia campus. Although the cost of attendance is considerable (approximately \$70,000 a year), the school does guarantee affordable University housing to students for all three years, something which definitely helps keep living costs down.

Columbia Law has a large enrollment of around 1,300 students, and significant academic and extracurricular offerings: 8 clinics, 3 externships, multiple study abroad programs in 11 countries, 14 scholarly journals, and over 70 student organizations. It has produced some impressive alumni throughout the years: Both FDR and Teddy Roosevelt attended Columbia Law (although neither graduated), and nine U.S. Supreme Court Justices also call it their legal alma mater.

With an Ivy League pedigree and a name recognized and respected all over the world, Columbia is undoubtedly a member of the law school elite.

Application deadline: 11/15 (Early); 2/15 (Regular)

Application fee: \$80

Financial aid deadline: 3/1

Type of school: Private

Tuition and fees: \$50,428 (2010 - 2011)

Admissions: Rolling (decisions by late April)

Acceptance percentage: 15%

Incoming class size: 400

Early Action/Early Decision available: Yes, binding

Part-time program available: No

GPA AND STANDARDIZED TESTS

LSAT 25th - 75th percentile range: 170 - 175

GPA 25th - 75th percentile range: 3.60 - 3.81

TOEFL required for some LL.M. applicants only.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Letters of recommendation: 2 required

Required essays: Personal statement

Optional essays: Diversity essay encouraged

Dean's Certification: Required for matriculating students

Additional documentation: Résumé (required; 2-page maximum)

Columbia Law: The PowerScore Perspective

A highly portable degree

When it comes to name recognition, Columbia is right up there with the most well-known law schools (think: Harvard). It is also arguably the most prestigious law school in New York City (with NYU a very close second). These two aspects allow Columbia graduates to apply for jobs outside the Northeast without having to resort to lengthy explanations about where they went to school. The Columbia name tends to speak for itself, and will open just about any door you can think of.

Urban is as urban does

Even though the school's location in New York City is considered one of its best attributes, there's no arguing that Columbia Law's address is about as urban as top NYC law schools can get. When you combine the "concrete jungle" feel with the rather considerable incoming class size (380 students), it is easy to see why some students might feel lost at this school. Columbia does a good job of creating a welcoming environment for its students, but that doesn't negate the fact that a large class within a large law school within a large city can be a detractor for some.

A theoretical bend

While Columbia does have a considerable clinical program, these clinics are probably the only place where students will have a chance to approach the law from a practical perspective. For the most part, classes and faculty are mostly concerned with presenting the theoretical side of the law.

Unparalleled faculty

At Columbia you will find one of the most distinguished and accomplished law faculties in the world. It would be impossible to list all the combined accomplishments of the Columbia Law faculty, due to both the sheer number of achievements and the size of the faculty itself. The student-to-faculty ratio is exceptional, and students speak highly of both the quality and accomplishments of their professors.

Affordable NYC housing?!

Columbia Law guarantees cheap housing for all three years of law school for its students. If you can get through the hassle of dealing with the Columbia Housing Office, you won't find a better deal in the city. If you decide to go outside the Columbia Housing safety net, though, be prepared to shell out considerable cash for a student pad.

Viewpoints galore

No surprise here: A school of this caliber located in a city of this magnitude will attract just about every ethnicity, and every political and religious viewpoint imaginable. Combine that with Columbia Law's commitment to both minority and foreign student enrollment, and the school becomes a microcosm of the larger NYC melting pot.

Red-tape blues

A large student body, combined with what students claim is a slow-moving, bureaucratic administration, can make things like obtaining housing and signing up for classes a pain. Be prepared to ask for things multiple times, and expect some delays after each of your requests.

Holy tuition, Batman!

The cost of attending Columbia Law is prohibitive. Clocking in at close to \$50,000 a year for tuition alone (and with planned yearly hikes on the way), your degree comes with a hefty price tag. And don't forget about the cost of living in New York City. The Big Apple can definitely put a strain on anyone's pocketbook, particularly a law student living in self-imposed poverty.

Where's the curb appeal?

The school's location is less than ideal. Although it is located in Manhattan (admittedly a plus), its placement at the edge of the Columbia University campus on Morningside Heights can lend a dreary feel to the building, particularly on drab, rainy days or cold winter mornings. There are a number of other New York City law schools that are preferable to Columbia when it comes to location

and curb appeal.

Where's the curve appeal?

Students report that the bulk of the student body hovers around the 3.0-3.25 mark. Hard work will get you a B/B+. An A is scarce, as is a C. This might be a boon to those who just want to work hard and don't want to worry about grades, but will likely be frustrating for those used to getting As for their sweat-soaked academic labors.

Gentlemen, start your engines

The academic environment is competitive and can certainly feel a bit cut-throat at times. And understandably so in the New York City legal market, where competition for jobs, internships, externships, and public interest positions can be fierce, regardless of the collegiality of the school.

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Columbia Law: The Numbers

ACCEPTANCE RATES

Full-time: 15% (1,235 of 8,505 admitted)
Part-time: N/A

GPA AND LSAT SCORES

GPA - 75th percentile: 3.81
GPA - Median: 3.72
GPA - 25th percentile: 3.60

LSAT - 75th percentile: 175
LSAT - Median: 172
LSAT - 25th percentile: 170

ENROLLMENT AND ETHNICITY

African-American: 30 (M); 75 (F); 8.0% of student body
American Indian: 1 (M); 1 (F); 0.2% of student body
Asian-American: 87 (M); 111 (F); 15.1% of student body
Caucasian: 442 (M); 334 (F); 59.2% of student body
Hispanic: 8 (M); 7 (F); 1.1% of student body
Mexican-American: 19 (M); 18 (F); 2.8% of student body
Puerto Rican: 8 (M); 11 (F); 1.5% of student body
International: 59 (M); 57 (F); 8.9% of student body
Non-Reported: 21 (M); 21 (F); 3.2% of student body

TRANSFERS (FIRST-YEAR) AND ATTRITION

Transfers in: 79
Transfers out: 7

1L attrition: 1 (0 Academic, 1 Other)
2L attrition: 6 (0 Academic, 1 Other)
3L attrition: None

FINANCIAL AID

Merit aid available? Yes*
Grants and scholarships available? Yes
Students receiving grants: 691, 54.5% of student body
Median grant amount: \$10,250.00
LRAP program available? Yes

*Columbia Law's Office of Financial Aid only considers students based on their financial need; however, a number of "stated purpose" merit-based fellowships are available for students of Brazilian, New Zealand, or Indian background.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

Wireless network availability? Yes
Number of wired connections available: 3,028
Hours per week the library is open: 102
Study seating capacity inside the library: 369
Number of full-time professional librarians: 19

CAREER SERVICES

On-campus Career Services Office? Yes
Number of full-time career services staffers? 12
Career services specializations: Law firms, government, public interest, public service, *pro bono*
On-Campus Interview (OCI) program? Yes; OCI happens in the fall for 2Ls and 3Ls, and in the spring for 1Ls.

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS*

**All statistics are 9 months after graduation*

Employment status known: 408, 100.00% of class
Employment status unknown: 0, 0.0% of class
Employed: 405, 99.3% of class
Pursuing graduate degrees: 1, 0.2% of class
Unemployed: 2, 0.5% of class

TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

Academia: 4, 1.0% of class
Business and Industry: 8, 2.0% of class
Government: 7, 1.7% of class
Judicial Clerkship: 44, 10.9% of class
Law Firms: 331, 81.7% of class
Public Interest: 12, 3.0% of class

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

New York, in particular New York City, is a huge market of employment for Columbia Law grads, followed the rest of the states in the Northeast U.S.

Students employed in-state: 66.2%
Students employed in foreign countries: 3.5%
Number of states where students are employed: 23

The biggest market for Columbia Law grads is the Northeast (69% of graduates), followed by the West/Rocky Mountain region (11.2%), the Mid-Atlantic (9.7%), and the Southeast (5.2%).

ALUMNI NETWORK

Columbia Law has a strong network of alumni working across the United States and in many foreign countries, and also has alumni groups and associations set up in every region of the globe, aimed at helping alumni network and expand their career prospects.

BAR PASSAGE RATES

First-time takers: 355 (92.96% reporting)
Average school pass rate: 96.67%
Average state pass rate: 88.98%
Average pass rate difference: 7.69%

Columbia Law: The School

"I could have chosen a less intense school, but I would have given up a lot of valuable opportunities doing so," says Marti M. '11. *Intense* seems to be the word of choice for many of Columbia Law's current students and grads. "The opportunities are endless; it would have been impossible to have taken advantage of them all," adds a recent grad.

Incoming class size: 400 (2009)

Typical first-year section size: 95

CURRICULUM

Columbia Law calls its first-year class load the **Foundation Curriculum**. The Foundation Curriculum includes the standard 1L classes seen at other schools (**Civil Procedure, Contracts, Torts, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, and Property**), as well as the opportunity to take one elective during the Spring Semester.

In addition to the basic 1L classes and elective, first-year students are required to take **Legal Methods** (which serves to "inaugurate generations of Columbians to legal research, analysis, and writing in a manner at once intellectually rigorous and professionally supportive," and is completed prior to matriculation in all other first-year courses), and **Legal Practice Workshop** (providing "training in the analysis of legal problems and in the hands-on use of a variety of legal materials"). (Source: Course descriptions)

First-year students are also required to participate in the **Foundation Year Moot Court**, which requires the drafting of a brief and the arguing of a case.

FACULTY

Student-to-faculty ratio: 10.1 : 1

Some of the school's notable faculty include:

Jane Ginsburg, daughter of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and author of trademark and copyright casebooks.

Tim Wu, known in technology circles for popularizing the phrase and concept of "net neutrality."

Patricia Williams, author and race and gender law expert.

Louis Henkin, a pioneer in the field of comparative constitutionalism.

ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

CLINICS AND EXTERNSHIPS: The clinical program at Columbia Law is open to all second- and third-year students. The school currently has eight clinical programs available: Child Advocacy, Environmental Law, Human Rights, Prisoners and Families, Lawyering In The Digital Age, Mediation, Nonprofit Organizations/Small Business, and Sexuality and Gender Law. Through Columbia Law's Social Justice Program, students can also participate in a number of externships (consisting of a substantial seminar and field experience at a non-profit organization or government agency). Current externship offerings include opportunities with the United Nations, the National State Attorneys General Program, and Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts.

STUDY ABROAD: Columbia Law has semester-abroad programs in Argentina, China, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, South Africa, and Switzerland.

JOINT DEGREE: The school has a number of international JD/LLM, JD/LLB, and JD/MA programs as well as dual-degree MBA, PhD, MPH, MS, MA, MSW, and MFA programs with other Columbia University schools and departments.

JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS

Columbia Law has 14 student-run journals: *Columbia Business Law Review*, *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, *Columbia Journal of Asian Law*, *Columbia Journal of Environmental Law*, *Columbia Journal of European Law*, *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, *Columbia Journal of Race & Law*, *Columbia Journal of Tax Law*, *Columbia Journal of Law & Social Problems*, *Columbia Journal of Law & the Arts*, *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, *Columbia Law Review*, *Columbia Science and Technology Law Review*, and *The American Review of International Arbitration*.

MOCK TRIAL AND MOOT COURT

Columbia Law has extensive intramural mock trial and moot court programs. The school also participates and is consistently successful in numerous national and international moot court and mock trial competitions.

• NOTABLE ALUMNI •

Given Columbia Law's age and prestige, the number of notable alumni it claims is not surprising. U.S. Presidents **Theodore Roosevelt** and **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** both attended Columbia Law (although they both, interestingly, dropped out before completing their studies, and neither ever obtained an official J.D. degree). **Ulysses S. Grant, Jr.**, son of U.S. President General Ulysses S. Grant also attended Columbia Law (and did graduate). **Eric Holder** (class of 1976), the current Attorney General of the United States, is also an alum, as are **nine current and former Supreme Court Justices**. The list of influential politicians (both U.S. and international) that have attended the school is enormous. Columbia Law also claims **many successful alums in the arts, athletics, religious, activism, and private arenas**.

One current Columbia Law student describes her classmates as “very interesting, intelligent, and involved.” “I loved, loved, *loved* my classmates,” enthused a recent grad.

The environment at the school, emphasizes one member of the class of ‘11, is “intense, but not *overly* competitive.” “Columbia does an extraordinary job catering to a diverse student body. They really make an effort to make people feel welcome,” states Jeff T. ‘08., and other students agree: the school works hard to make each class a cohesive whole by providing numerous activities for classmates to get to know one another.

A quick look at the sheer number of activities and extracurriculars available showcases a student body that is varied and engaged, and interested in exploring as many opportunities as possible. There was only one negative aspect of the school environment mentioned by our student evaluators: “The social scene is a bit weak for older students.” However, with New York City just outside the door, older students looking to supplement their law school activities with adult extracurriculars will likely have an easy time finding activities that fit their needs.

Diversity is also something Columbia Law prides itself in. With a 2009 total minority enrollment of 28.7%, and 8.9% of the student body hailing from a foreign nation, Columbia is one of the most diverse law schools in the country. This is definitely one of the student body’s strongest assets, and adds to the value, depth, and breadth of classroom discussions and debates.

Columbia Law’s student body is also enriched by the LL.M. (Master of Laws) candidates that make up part of each incoming class. These students, according to the Columbia Law website, “have held important positions in their countries’ governments, corporations, or in political or human rights organizations,” and consistently add another layer of individuality to the law school conversation.

ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- African Law Students Association
- Alpine Society
- American Civil Liberties Union
- American Constitution society
- Amnesty International
- Asian and Pacific American Law Students Association
- Black Law Students Association
- California Society
- Christian Legal Society
- Civil Rights Law Society
- Columbia Card Club
- Columbia Business and Law Association
- Columbia Gastronomy Society
- Columbia International Antitrust Law Association
- Columbia International Arbitration Association (CIAA)
- Columbia Latin American Business Law Association
- Columbia Law Opera and Classical Society
- Columbia Law Revue
- Columbia Law School Democrats
- Columbia Law School Military Association (CLSMA)
- Columbia Law School Republicans
- Columbia Law School Softball Club
- Columbia Law School Trial Team
- Columbia Law Women’s Association
- Columbia Real Estate Law Society
- Columbia Society of International Law
- Columbia Strategic Simulation Society
- Criminal Justice Action Network
- Deans’ Cup
- De Vinimus
- Domestic Violence Project
- Education Law and Policy Safety
- Empowering Women of Color
- Entertainment, Arts, and Sports Law Society
- Environmental Law Society
- Federalist Society
- Golf Club
- Harlem Tutorial Program
- High School Law Institute
- Impact
- Insite
- J. Reuben Clark Law Society
- Jewish Law Students Association
- Koleinu
- Korean Law Students Association (KLSA)
- Latino/a Law Students Association
- Law Students for Reproductive Justice
- Law Students for Social Enterprise (LSSE)
- Mentoring Youth through Legal Education (MYLE)
- Middle Eastern Law Students Association (MELSA)
- Midwest Society
- Moot Court
- National Lawyers Guild
- Native American Law Students Association
- New England Law Students Association
- NHK: Japanese Legal Studies Association
- Outlaws
- Public Interest Law Foundation
- Rightslink
- Running from the Law
- Society for Chinese Law
- Society for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
- Society for Law, Science and Technology
- South Asian Law Students Association
- Student Animal Legal Defense Fund
- Student Hurricane Network
- Student Senate
- Tenants’ Right Project
- Transfer and Visiting Student Organization
- Unemployment Action Center
- Y’allSA
- Yoga Club

• CLASS PROFILE •

8,505 students applied for entry to Columbia Law class of 2011, with 397 eventually matriculating.

The incoming class hailed from 38 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and 21 foreign countries.

52% of the class was female, 48% was male, 37% were minorities or students of color, and 10% were foreign.

78% of the class was between the

ages of 21 and 24, 21% was 24 or older, and 1% was 20 or younger. 37% of the class came to law school directly after college.

The most popular majors in the incoming class were Political Science and Government (25%), Economics (14%), History (12%), and Literature/English (10%). The least popular were Psychology (3%) and Finance/Accounting/Business (1%).

11 members of the class had M.A. degrees, 8 had M.S. degrees, and 4

had Ph.Ds. Another six had other forms of advanced degrees.

The class was varied in accolades and experiences, and included engineers, entrepreneurs, financial analysts, management consultants, Fulbright Scholars, economists, human and civil rights activists, journalists and editors, military veterans, national and Olympic athletes, Peace Corps volunteers, performing artists and musicians, political aides and analysts, teachers and professors, and valedictorians and salutatorians.

Columbia Law: The City

Setting: Urban

Columbia Law is located in the Manhattan borough of New York City, near the New York/New Jersey state line. Nestled just a few blocks away from the Hudson River and sitting at the edge of the Columbia University campus, it is centrally positioned to allow for the full urban feel of New York City, complete with roaring traffic and plentiful subway stops.

LIVING EXPENSES

"I enjoy being in NYC for the myriad opportunities," says a current student, "but it is certainly expensive." The cost of living in one of the world's most expensive metropolises is clearly one of the drawbacks to attending Columbia Law (or any of the New York City law schools). A student can expect to pay at least \$66,000 a year in tuition and living expenses while attending Columbia Law.

Estimated academic year living expenses*

Housing/Utilities	\$11,550.00
Food/Board	\$ 4,950.00
Personal/Miscellaneous	\$ 3,700.00
TOTAL	\$20,200.00

**Values provided by Columbia Law. Travel expenses not included*

HOUSING

Columbia Law has housing available for its students, and guarantees some type of University housing for all three years of Law School for all admitted first-year law students who apply for housing by May 1 of the year they expect to matriculate. Compared to standard New York City housing rates, Columbia housing is extremely reasonable.

On-campus housing available?	Y
Apartment rental range (1 BR/1 BA)*	\$979-\$2,913

**Rates are for Columbia-provided housing*

DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the 2006 population of New York City to be 8,214,426 people, with 57.3% of the population between 18 and 65 years of age. 27.4% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher.

Population density in the New York City area (as per the 2000 census) is 26,403 persons per square mile.

The 2000 census puts the ethnic makeup of the city as 44.7% white, 27.0% of Hispanic or Latino origin, 26.6% African American, 9.8% Asian, 0.5% American Indian or Alaskan native, 0.1% native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 4.9% from two or more races.

PARKING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

There are few places in the world with a public transportation system that is as well-developed as that of New York City. The city's subway system runs almost 24 hours a day, and Grand Central Terminal, also known as Grand Central Station, is one of the biggest railway stations in the world. Although students may find the transportation system a little intimidating and confusing at first, most quickly adapt to the fast-paced subway, taxi, and pedestrian life, and can get from one place to another within the city with ease.

As is the case with most New York City schools, the student mantra when it comes to transportation is "Don't bring a car!" Parking is both difficult to find and extremely costly, and maintenance costs are hard to justify considering how infrequently you will use your vehicle.

AREA ATTRACTIONS & ENTERTAINMENT

It's New York City: "[The] opportunities are endless," says a current student. From the rich cultural heritage of nearby Harlem (the famous Apollo Theater is only a few blocks from the law school) to the bright lights of Broadway (just a subway ride away), the opportunities for out-of-school entertainment really are "too numerous to list," says a recent graduate.

The Columbia Law viewbook puts it best: "New York City offers unparalleled opportunities for personal growth, enrichment, and just plain fun. This is a city of mind-boggling scope and variety, where 80 languages are spoken and where an Italian deli, an Ethiopian restaurant, and a Chinese noodle shop share the same block. It is a city with hundreds of museums, art galleries, and theaters.

"Music lovers can choose from major venues such as Lincoln Center to small clubs in Greenwich Village to improvisational jazz in Central Park.

"For sports enthusiasts, whether athletes or fans, the city provides an exciting array of opportunities for exercise, competition, and enjoyment."

There is also plenty to do right in Morningside Heights: Take in a free musical performance at the Manhattan School of Music (or head down the street to Julliard and attend a show there). Visit the General Grant National Memorial where 18th U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant is entombed. Go to Straus Park and see the memorial for the victims of the *Titanic*. Visit one of the many historic area churches. Or eat at any of the uniquely New York restaurants just a few blocks' walk from the school's front door.