

The University of Chicago Law School

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THE BASICS

The University of Chicago Law School (also known as UChicago Law or Chicago Law) was founded in 1902. It was accredited by the ABA in 1923.

Located in Hyde Park, a neighborhood on the south side of Chicago, the school is about 15-25 minutes from downtown. Students who rely on public transportation will find buses, subways, and rapid transit trains readily available. The cost of attendance for Chicago Law is slightly higher than average for the schools on this list, although the cost of living is low for a large metropolitan area. In total, students can expect to pay close to \$66,000 a year.

Chicago Law is on the smaller end of the spectrum when it comes to school size, with a total student enrollment of around 600 students. While this is definitely a plus when it comes to class and section sizes, some students have commented that it can sometimes feel a little “claustrophobic.”

The school is undoubtedly the premier law school in the Midwest, and has a particularly strong reputation there, as well as in the Mid-Atlantic and Western states.

Chicago Law has a good range of academic and extracurricular activities, although not as many as one might expect from a school of its caliber: 4 clinics, 8 clinical projects, 4 joint-degree options, 3 journals, and 57 student organizations. The school does not offer any study abroad programs.

Application deadline: 12/1 (Early); 2/1 (Regular)

Application fee: \$75

Financial aid deadline: 2/1

Type of school: Private

Tuition and fees: \$46,185 (2010 - 2011)

Admissions: Rolling (decisions within 8-10 weeks)

Acceptance percentage: 18% (2009)

Incoming class size: 191 (2009)

Early Action/Early Decision available: Yes, binding

Part-time program available: No

GPA AND STANDARDIZED TESTS

LSAT 25th - 75th percentile range: 169 - 173

GPA 25th - 75th percentile range: 3.63 - 3.84

TOEFL required for international applicants.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Letters of recommendation: 2 required (4 maximum)

Required essays: Personal statement

Optional essays: None listed

Dean's Certification: None required

Additional documentation: Résumé (required)

Chicago Law: The PowerScore Perspective

Exceptional faculty

Chicago Law is well staffed with prestigious instructors and faculty members. Students will encounter published authors and nationally recognized experts in every field of law offered by the school (even the Office of Career Services boasts published staff). Two well-known names have emerged from the Chicago Law faculty—President Barack Obama (who taught there for twelve years, from 1992 to 2004), and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Elena Kagan (who taught at Chicago from 1991 to 1997). The academic faculty is well-known enough to be familiar by last names only—Posner, Leiter, and Helmholtz are just a few of the recognizable professors on the staff.

On the conservative side

Our exploration of Chicago Law did bring us in contact with some students and grads who argued that the student body and faculty were a bit on the conservative side and not always open to a variety of dissimilar viewpoints. Though not widespread, scattered comments about the “cold,” “sterile,” and “detached” nature of some debates indicated that some students yearned for a more “open-minded” and progressive environment.

Renowned reputation

Chicago Law is undoubtedly the premier law school in the Midwest. Although its national reputation may not inspire the awe that some other schools in this collection do, grads report that a degree from Chicago Law will open almost any door. The northeast markets will be more competitive for graduates, but legal markets in the Midwest, California, and the Mid-Atlantic States are easily accessible.

New Dean

Saul Levmore, who was the Dean of the law school from 2001 to 2009, stepped down at the end of 2009, and was replaced by Dean Michael Schill (former Dean of UCLA Law, and a professor at NYU Law and UPenn Law). Although it has been over a year since the transition, be prepared for changes from the “old regime” to continue as the new administration settles in. Many members of the Chicago Law faculty have been hired in the last few years, which could lead to more adjustments and changes in the near future.

Quarters, not semesters

The school runs on a quarterly system, which is relatively unique among law schools. This system allows students to explore a wider variety of classes and electives and since classes meet for only two quarters, the school claims that the transition into the rigors of law school life is eased by a more manageable finals schedule. Further, with the entire University of Chicago school system operating on the quarterly system, law students find dual degree options much easier to pursue, making the quarter system a definite advantage.

Unusual grading system

Chicago also uses an unusual grading rubric that can be confusing. Rather than the standard A-F scale, the school uses a numerical system that ranges from 155 to 186. As per the University’s Registrar, the grades can be interpreted as follows: 186-180=A, 179-174=B, 173-168=C, 167-160=D, 159-155=F. The median at the school is a 177, right in the middle of the “B” scale. Non-law courses are not awarded numerical or letter grades, but are instead given “Pass/Fail,” and are not included in the calculation of a student’s GPA.

Location

Students and grads tell us, “if you want it, Chicago has it.” From sports and food to nightlife and arts, students can take advantage of this major US city to lighten the toll law school inevitably takes. However, be aware that the campus is not particularly close to downtown. Although the school address names Chicago as its city, be prepared for about a 20-minute drive via car between the campus and downtown. For students using public transportation,

the commute on the L will run anywhere from 15 to 25 minutes. Additionally, prospective students should consider that the neighborhood where the law school is located—Hyde Park—has a reputation for heightened criminal activity, though the campus itself is safer than other non-university locales in Hyde Park.

Winter blues

The winters in Chicago can be rough (the average high in January is 31°F, and the average low is 16°F). Bring your parkas and mittens, and expect to use them.

Although it doesn’t have a national reputation that is quite as strong as some other schools’, a degree from Chicago will open just about any door. You may face some competition in certain markets, but you should have no problems getting your foot in the door in many others.

Chicago Law: The Numbers

ACCEPTANCE RATES

Full-time: 18% (982 of 5,403 admitted)
Part-time: N/A

GPA AND LSAT SCORES

GPA - 75th percentile: 3.84
GPA - Median: 3.76
GPA - 25th percentile: 3.63

LSAT - 75th percentile: 173
LSAT - Median: 171
LSAT - 25th percentile: 169

ENROLLMENT AND ETHNICITY

African-American: 17 (M); 20 (F); 6.3% of student body
American Indian: 2 (M); 0 (F); 0.3% of student body
Asian-American: 24 (M); 44 (F); 11.5% of student body
Caucasian: 208 (M); 138 (F); 58.6% of student body
Hispanic: 13 (M); 20 (F); 5.6% of student body
Mexican-American: 10 (M); 11 (F); 3.6% of student body
Puerto Rican: 3 (M); 3 (F); 1.0% of student body
International: 8 (M); 6 (F); 2.4% of student body
Non-Reported: 41 (M); 22 (F); 10.7% of student body

TRANSFERS (FIRST-YEAR) AND ATTRITION

Transfers in: 24
Transfers out: 6

1L attrition: 1 (0 Academic, 1 Other)
2L attrition: 8 (0 Academic, 8 Other)
3L attrition: 2 (0 Academic, 2 Other)

FINANCIAL AID

Merit aid available? Yes
Grants and scholarships available? Yes
Students receiving grants: 333, 56.2% of student body
Median grant amount: \$10,800.00
LRAP program available? Yes

All admitted students are automatically considered for merit-based scholarships. As per the school's Financial Aid Office, merit is the primary consideration when awarding funds. Close to half of the students receive scholarships and grants, and 80% take out loans.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

Wireless network availability? Yes
Number of wired connections available: 1,115
Hours per week the library is open: 90
Study seating capacity inside the library: 483
Number of full-time professional librarians: 10

CAREER SERVICES

On-campus Career Services Office? Yes
Number of full-time career services staffers? 7
Career services specializations: Private sector, non-profit, public interest, corporate

On-Campus Interview (OCI) program? Yes, in the fall for 2L/3L students, in the winter for 1L students.

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS*

**All statistics are 9 months after graduation*

Employment status known: 211, 100.0% of class
Employment status unknown: 0, 0.0% of class
Employed: 203, 96.2% of class
Pursuing graduate degrees: 3, 1.4% of class
Unemployed: 2, 0.9% of class

TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

Academia: 0, 0.0% of class
Business and Industry: 6, 3.0% of class
Government: 4, 2.0% of class
Judicial Clerkship: 26, 12.8% of class
Law Firms: 165, 81.3% of class
Public Interest: 1, 0.5% of class

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The biggest markets for Chicago Law grads are the Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI), Mid Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA), and Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA).

Students employed in-state: 34.5%
Students employed in foreign countries: 0.5%
Number of states where students are employed: 22

The South Atlantic and South Central states are also popular employment locations. New England, the Mountain states, and the North Central region of the country hire the fewest graduates.

ALUMNI NETWORK

The school has close to 10,000 alumni working in the United States and in over 70 countries. The school makes a strong effort to keep its alumni network connected, and offers them employment assistance after graduation.

BAR PASSAGE RATES

First-time takers: 195 (84.62% reporting)
Average school pass rate: 95.15%
Average state pass rate: 87.56%
Average pass rate difference: 7.59%

Chicago Law: The School

"One of the best things about U. Chicago is that it demands excellence of its teachers. And the professors live up to that demand. I have never been in an academic environment where the teaching was so consistently high-quality," says a current student. "The concrete marble and glass architecture [of the building] lend it a very mausoleum feel," though, says a grad.

Incoming class size: 191 (2009)

Typical first-year section size: 30

CURRICULUM

Chicago Law is on a quarter system, rather than the more traditional semester system. Students take classes during the Autumn, Winter, and Spring Quarters. They take seven mandatory courses during the 1L year: **Contracts, Torts, Property, Criminal Law, Civil Procedure, Elements of the Law**, and **Legal Writing** (or "Bigelow," as it's known). All courses, save for Elements of the Law, are year-long.

Elements of the Law is a course unique to the school, which it describes as an introduction "to the law as an interdisciplinary field through interactions with fields such as philosophy, economics, psychology, and political theory."

Legal Writing is known as "Bigelow" because it is taught by one of Chicago Law's six Bigelow Teaching Fellows (who "come to the Law School for two years to gain experience towards a career as a legal academic"). It culminates in the Spring Quarter, when students write an appellate brief, and argue it before a panel of faculty and Chicago alumni.

FACULTY

Student-to-faculty ratio: 9.5 : 1

Chicago Law's prominent faculty includes:

Richard A. Posner, a legal scholar and author, and judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

Brian Leiter, the founder of the law school's Center for Law, Philosophy & Human Values.

Ronald H. Coase, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics.

ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

CLINICS: Chicago Law has four clinical opportunities, which include The Edwin F. Mandel Legal Aid Clinic (which houses eight clinical projects: Civil Rights and Police Accountability Project; Criminal and Juvenile Justice Project; Employment Discrimination Project; Federal Criminal Justice Project; Housing Initiative; Mental Health Project; and Social Service Project), The Exoneration Project, The Immigrant Child Advocacy Center, and The Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship (a joint project between the Institute for Justice and the law school).

STUDY ABROAD: The school does not offer any study abroad opportunities.

JOINT DEGREE: Students can apply to obtain joint degrees with other University of Chicago schools. The law school lists the following programs as the most popular: A JD/MBA with Chicago's Booth School of Business (students can also obtain a JD/PhD there), a JD/MA degree in International Relations, and a JD/MPP with Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy. Most joint-degree programs take four years to complete, although the PhD programs may take longer. The school also has financial aid fellowships in place for those students pursuing JD/PhDs.

JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS

The school has three student-edited journals: *The Chicago Journal of International Law* (published biannually), *The University of Chicago Law Review* (published quarterly), and *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* (published annually). It also publishes three faculty-edited journals: *The Journal of Law & Economics*, *The Journal of Legal Studies*, and *The Supreme Court Review*. Alumni of the school publish *The Green Bag*.

MOCK TRIAL AND MOOT COURT

The Hinton Moot Court is the school's internal moot court competition. It is open to second- and third-year students. 2L students who advance to the semifinals and finals serve on the Moot Court Board during their third year. Although it doesn't have a formal mock trial program, it does offer Pre-Trial Advocacy, and Trial Advocacy courses as part of its curricular clinical offerings.

• NOTABLE ALUMNI •

The University of Chicago School of Law has accomplished alumni in many fields both inside and outside the law. They include: **John Ashcroft** '67, 79th Attorney General of the United States; **Adam Silver** '88, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer for the National Basketball Association (NBA); **Harvey Levin** '75, Executive Producer of celebrity gossip website TMZ.com and TMZ TV; **Rex E. Lee** '63, former Solicitor General of the United States and current president of Brigham Young University; **Norton Clapp** '29, former Weyerhaeuser chairman and president, who also helped build the Seattle Space Needle; **Frank H. Easterbrook** '73, U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit judge; and **Robert H. Bork** '53, former Solicitor General of the United States and failed Supreme Court nominee.

Students' comments are generally positive when discussing their time at Chicago Law, though some were dissatisfied by a perceived conservative vibe: "There is a culture of academic seriousness, but without pretentious behavior," says a current student. "There is a diversity of viewpoints represented in the student body and on the faculty (as well as a never-ending string of lunch talks and other events to attend)." A grad described the school as "nerdy, congenial, but also uptight and conservative." A few others agree, and say the school can sometimes feel "too sterile, too academic, and somewhat conservative."

Students do appreciate the school's "polite Midwest flavor." Although classes and professors can be tough, student life is apparently pretty easy: "The students are serious without being openly competitive." While students appreciated the limited class and section sizes, they did warn that "the school is small, though, so it can feel a little cramped at times. It's good to have some kind of outside interests to keep you from feeling too claustrophobic."

Their position as part of the larger university "means there is always a lot of activity going on. Whether you're looking for athletics, music, interest group activities, or some other outlet, you can find it here or in the city."

Even the naysayers agree that a degree from Chicago Law is a powerful asset when seeking employment: It is "very easy to get a job from here," they say. Current students agree: "U. Chicago opens doors and has connections to all the best legal careers and employers in the country. You can take a degree from here anywhere. The school's reputation with judges, lawyers, and academics is top-notch."

The three years are tough, but worth it: "It's a challenging environment, because people take their classes, their scholarship, and their work here seriously. But stepping up to that challenge is worth every bit of effort."

ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Student organizations are an important part of student life at Chicago Law. Through them, students can join causes and groups that deal with the legal and non-legal matters that are most important to them.

The student government, or Law Students Association, is in charge of overseeing student organizations as well as planning school-wide events like the "Party of the First Part" during the fall quarter, "Over the Hump" in winter, and the law school's Spring Formal.

- American Civil Liberties Union
- American Constitution Society
- Amicus
- Apathy
- Asian Pacific American Law Students Association
- Black Law Students Association
- Bull Moose Society
- Chicago Investment Law Group
- Chicago Journal of International Law
- Chicago Law Foundation
- China Law Society
- Christian Legal Society
- CLAWS
- Criminal Law Society
- Dallin H. Oaks Society
- The Edmund Burke Society
- Entertainment & Sports Law Society
- Environmental Law Society
- Federalist Society
- FeedChicago
- Health Law Society
- Hinton Moot Court
- Human Rights Law Society
- Intellectual Property Law Society
- International Law Society
- JD/MBA Association
- Japan Law Society
- Jewish Law Students Association
- Latino/a Law Students Association
- Law and Internet Forum
- Law and Society
- Law, Inc.
- Law Review
- Law School Democrats
- Law School Film Fest
- Law School Musical
- Law School Republicans
- Law Women's Caucus
- Lawyers as Leaders
- Legal Forum
- Middle Eastern Law Students Association
- Neighbors
- Muslim Law Students Association
- OutLaw
- Personal Finance Club
- The Phoenix (student newspaper)
- Public Interest Law Society
- Res Musicata
- Scales of Justice
- South Asian Law Students Association
- Spring Break of Service
- Streetlaw
- St. Thomas More Society
- Trivia Contest
- Wine Mess
- Winston Churchill Gaming Society
- Women's Mentoring Program

• CLASS PROFILE •

The University of Chicago Law School received 5,403 applications in 2009. Of those, 982 were accepted, and 191 students eventually matriculated for the class of 2012.

The class of 2012 was 27% minority students.

The 75th percentile LSAT score for this class was 173. The median was 171, and the 25th percentile was 169.

The 75th percentile GPA for the class

was 3.84. The median was 3.76, and the 25th percentile was 3.63.

In 2010, the school matriculated 205 students for the incoming class of 2013.

The 75th percentile LSAT score for this class was 172. The median was 171, and the 25th percentile was 168. Scores for the class ranged from 154 to 179.

The 75th percentile GPA was 3.87. The median was 3.78, and the 25th

percentile was 3.59. GPAs for the class ranged from 3.10 to 4.11.

Students for the class of 2013 hailed from 36 different states and 102 undergraduate institutions.

The average age for the class was 24.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the total student body was 593 students.

55% of the student body was male; 45% of the class was female.

Chicago Law: The City

Setting: Urban

Chicago Law's location in the Hyde Park neighborhood is not located as centrally within the city as one might think. The school is somewhat removed from the hustle and bustle of downtown, although it is only a bus or car ride away. Most second- and third-year students don't live in the vicinity of the school, and commute to class each day.

LIVING EXPENSES

The cost of living for Chicago Law students is about average for the schools on this list. Despite its location in one of the Midwest's (and the country's) largest cities, students find that it is possible to maintain a relatively reasonable budget.

Estimated academic year living expenses*

Room/Board	\$13,455.00
Books	\$1,650.00
Personal Expenses/Misc.	\$2,670.00
Transportation Expenses	\$1,785.00
TOTAL	\$19,560.00

**Values provided by Chicago Law*

HOUSING

Chicago Law has 28 different university-run housing buildings within close proximity to campus for its students in Hyde Park. According to the school, almost 80% of first-year students live in Hyde Park, either in university housing or in one of the large, privately-run apartment buildings in the area. After 1L year, many students choose to live outside of Hyde Park and commute to school.

On-campus housing available? Y
Average apartment rental cost (1 BR/1 BA) \$900/mo

DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the 2006 population of Chicago, IL to be 2,833,321 people, with 63.5% of the population between 18 and 65 years of age. 25.5% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher.

Population density in the Chicago area (as per the 2000 census) is 12,751 persons per square mile.

The 2000 census puts the ethnic makeup of the city as 42.0% white, 26.0% of Hispanic or Latino origin, 36.8% African American, 0.4% American Indian or Alaskan native, 4.3% Asian, 0.1% native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 2.9% from two or more races.

PARKING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

One of the best parts about living in a big city is the amount of public transportation available. Although having a car can be useful, it can also be a hindrance (both because of the cost of parking and the difficulty of finding a parking spot)—because of this, even though many students own cars, they also avail themselves of public transportation.

Chicago has both a bus and a rapid transit and subway system. They are operated by the Chicago Transit Authority. The subway system is known as the "L." The Chicago L services points throughout the city and suburbs with 8 lines: Blue, Brown, Green, Orange, Pink, Purple, Red, and Yellow.

The city is serviced by two airports: O'Hare International Airport, and Midway International Airport.

AREA ATTRACTIONS & ENTERTAINMENT

There are endless amusements to be had in Chicago. As one grad says, "jazz festivals, blues festivals, film festivals, concerts—it's Chicago—they have everything!" Another student advises, "you definitely have to get to Wrigley Field to see the Cubs, even if you're not a baseball fan." Lalapalooza is a major annual attraction, and one student we spoke to recommended that new residents "make a point to get to some of the many great museums we have – Science and Industry, Art Institute, etc." When it comes to eateries there are too many to list but "Hop Leaf in Andersonville is an amazing bar with a huge selection of craft beers," and "the Publican is a cool little place in the West Loop with the best brunch in the city."

Sports fans who relocate to Chicago are in luck, as the city has six major professional teams: The Chicago Bears (NFL), Chicago Blackhawks (NHL), Chicago Bulls (NBA), Chicago Cubs (MLB), Chicago White Sox (MLB), and Chicago Fire (MLS).

Students can swing by President Barack Obama's Chicago home in Kenwood (although you may have to view it from afar, since the Secret Service has the area well patrolled!).

In the immediate Hyde Park vicinity, students can check out Jackson Park, which is generally acknowledged to be one of Hyde Park's top spots. The site of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, who also designed New York City's Central Park.