

Law School Reviews

Fordham University School of Law

By Rebecca Smeyne

In 1905, Fordham Law School opened its doors to thirteen eager young students. 22,000 graduates later, Fordham is the sixth largest law school in the United States with approximately 1,450 students currently enrolled in the Juris Doctor program. With a current US News and World Report ranking of 28, admission to Fordham Law School is highly competitive.

Admitted students to the law school generally possess an LSAT score at or above the 91st percentile and an undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) of 3.30 or higher. Over the past five years, Fordham has received an average of 5,000 applications annually for approximately 450 seats, and its acceptance rate has ranged from 13% to 29%. Like most competitive law schools, LSAT scores and UGPA are the most significant factors determining admission into Fordham for the majority of students, and the related quantitative statistics reflect this fact. Other factors considered in the admission process are student activities, community service, communication skills, leadership ability, and propensity for public service. These aspects, however, are merely guidelines in determining admission. According to Assistant Dean of Admission Kevin Downey, "If a student meets all qualifications but has a weak cumulative GPA, we will consider grade trends." He also adds, "If someone has an incredibly high GPA from a really good school, it certainly makes up for a lower LSAT score."

Furthermore, if a student encloses an affirmative action statement with his or her application, other factors also become relevant to the admissions process. Through affirmative action, the university gives special consideration to students who may have overcome socio-political, economic, or cultural obstacles. Programs like affirmative action help to maintain a diverse environment within the school. Approximately 27% of the students at Fordham are members of an ethnic minority group, and 43% of the students are women. Students hail from 44 states, the District of Columbia, five foreign countries, and have degrees from 270 different American and foreign colleges and universities.

Columbia University is Fordham Law School's fifth largest feeder, with forty-five accepted students entering last year. The large number of Columbia students accepted by Fordham each year reveals much about the institution's opinion of Columbia graduates. Downey confirmed this impression by stating that "a Columbia University undergraduate education is regarded very highly." Although an Ivy League education hardly guarantees successful performance in law school, Downey notes that "Columbia undergraduates typically have fared very well at Fordham."

The typical program of study at Fordham consists of several core courses that provide students with the basic legal concepts that will serve as the foundation for future coursework as well as the practice of law. The program designed for first-year students includes Civil Procedure, Contracts, Legal Writing, Property, Torts, Criminal Justice, Legal Process, and Constitutional Law. Due to the rigorouslyness of the curriculum, first-year students are forbidden to seek outside employment that exceeds twenty hours per week. Things are not, however, quite as difficult as they seem. According to

a third year law student and Princeton alumnus, Anthony Cicia, "People vastly overstated the harshness of the first year." Meanwhile, required upperclass courses are Corporations and Partnerships and Professional Responsibility. In addition, students are also required to take enough electives to satisfy the 83 credit degree requirement.

Fordham also offers special programs for students who wish to complete degrees while working simultaneously as well as for those who seek joint degrees. For students who are unable to enroll full-time during the day, Fordham offers a unique evening division in which students enroll in classes principally between 6 and 9 P.M. during the week. Students in the evening division of the law school typically earn their degrees in four years, rather than three, though the requirements for the J.D. are the same as those for day students. Fordham also offers a combined J.D. and M.B.A. program with the Martino Graduate School of Business Administration at Fordham University.

Fordham Law School also has one of the most comprehensive public service programs in the nation. According to Downey, Fordham "places a strong emphasis on public interest." In fact, its Sidney C. Norris Chair of Law is the only chaired professorship in the nation devoted to law in the public interest. According to Cornell graduate and second-year student Lara Pitaro, "Fordham has a well-respected Public Interest Office, so the public sector seems to like us a lot." Additionally, twenty-five members of the entering class who have demonstrated a commitment to public service are offered an opportunity to work in the Stein Scholars Program which involves interning in public service positions in exchange for academic credit and a \$3,000 stipend during their first summer.

One of Fordham's most attractive assets is its respected clinical program which consists of simulation courses, "in-house" clinics, and clinical externships. Fordham's ten simulation courses allow students to engage in problem-solving techniques through role-playing where a student assumes the role of attorney within the controlled environment of the classroom. "In-house" clinics offered are a litigation skills clinic, a domestic violence clinic, a mediation clinic, and a prosecution clinic. Of the externships, students may choose from judicial, surrogate's court, civil and administrative law, and criminal law. Outside of the classroom, Fordham also sponsors over thirty student organizations in addition to five scholarly law journals and an extensive moot court program.

One would imagine that at a school such as Fordham competition would be intense and the curriculum extremely rigorous. On the contrary, in terms of the atmosphere students and faculty seem to agree that Fordham is a very friendly place. Robert Gorzelany, a third-year law student and a Williams College graduate, says that "Fordham promotes itself as the friendly school, and that's largely been true in my experience." Downey adds, "It's not a cutthroat environment." Moreover, much like Columbia and NYU, one of Fordham's greatest assets is its location in New York City. The city is a resources for academic and professional pursuits as well as entertainment. The students at Fordham seem to embrace the city as their campus. Gorzelany agrees that "the entire city is the social scene." While Tim Dockery, a third-year law student and graduate of Georgetown University, also believes that entertaining oneself in the city is the best way to relieve the stress of law school, he also realizes that other options exist and stated "It's New York-most students prefer to socialize outside of school. However, those who want to have fun with fellow law students do, and even more so if they live in the dorms."

Fordham offers on-campus living options for law students, consisting of 208 two and three bedroom apartments on the upper floors of the residence hall, which

offers dramatic views of Lincoln Center and Manhattan. Attractive features of the new, furnished dorm include fully equipped kitchens, game rooms, and a health and exercise facility. Dockery comments, "My housing is great. I live in the 50s and pay only \$380 for my own room." The students unanimously agree that The Juilliard School and Lincoln Center, home to the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, and the New York City Ballet and Opera, are desirable neighbors.

Fordham also maintains an active Career Planning and Placement Office that has an on-campus interview program, consortium job fairs, an active job search file, and many useful career planning and placement guides. The center provides mock interviews with attorneys and consultants as well as an overnight resume and cover letter critiquing service. Statistics concerning placement following graduation reveal that 91.8% of the class of 1995 reported employment with a median starting salary of \$60,000. In addition, Fordham students practice in all different areas of law, with 62.8% going into private practice, 16.0% into government, 17.5% into business, 0.6% into public interest, and 0.9% into academics. Cicia contends that the job prospects are "excellent in NYC for Fordham students. Outside of NYC, however, prospects are dim."

On the whole, Fordham students seem very content with their school and especially with their peers. Concerning her fellow students, Pitaro remarked that they are "of the highest intellectual caliber I have ever met. Coming from Cornell Undergrad I thought I had seen it all, but Fordham makes Cornell look like high school."

Fordham Law School is a friendly and supportive place that consistently produces some of the best graduates in the country. A first hand visit to the small campus conveys an aura of vitality, camaraderie, and intellectual vigor. Cicia describes it best when he says, "Fordham is a first rate institution."

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

By Sharon Chase

Located in the heart of Greenwich Village, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, a division of Yeshiva University, has distinguished itself as one of New York's finest law schools. Not only can Cardozo boast of a renowned faculty and dedicated administration, its students have access to unparalleled cultural and social opportunities.

Academically, Cardozo students are at the head of their classes. The average grade point average of incoming freshmen is 3.310, and the median L.S.A.T. score is 159. Twenty-six states and twelve countries are represented in this fall's entering class; Columbia graduates make up roughly six percent of the class of 1997. Once admitted, students have the opportunity to matriculate at one of several times during the year: September, January, and May. For those who cannot wait to enter the real world, Cardozo offers May and January entrants the opportunity to complete their studies in two and a half rather than the traditional three years.

Cardozo's unique practice of dividing first years into sections of fifty-five students helps ease social and academic tensions inherent in a city school. This program receives high marks from students, because it allows students to form study groups within their sections and also facilitates friendships. With his or her section, a first-year student takes both traditional courses as well as a legal writings and moot court requirement. Courses beyond the first year are essentially electives, allowing students the opportunity to specialize in their particular fields of interest. Moreover, this is supplemented by a great number of internships, externships, and summer and clinical programs.

Due to Cardozo's metropolitan location, many students choose to study entertainment law. Meanwhile, those who have the opportunity to participate in the Intellectual Property Externship Program, have a chance to combine appropriate courses with hands-on work at a firm specializing in intellectual law. In addition, students interested in becoming international mediators have ample opportunity to travel abroad. Of special interest is the Uri and Caroline Bauer Israel Program, which allows students to study for a summer at the Law School of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem.

Currently, the field of law that has attracted a great deal of interest, particularly from Cardozo, involves the role of genetic evidence in the court. Those who participate in the Innocence Project under Professor Barry Scheck, who gained prominence as a member of O.J. Simpson's legal defense, deal with both the constitutional and practical aspects of DNA testing. Through their efforts, students have helped exonerate, on the basis of DNA evidence, over a dozen wrongly convicted criminals.

Students at Cardozo stress the importance of their education that stems from both classroom and city. Located in Greenwich Village, Cardozo is not for the faint of heart. As Director of Admissions Robert Schwartz admitted, "Every year there are one or two students who leave for personal reasons; they aren't able to adjust to New York." The majority of students, however, are from the tri-state area and apply to Cardozo with a desire to learn in and from the city. Ironically, the attractiveness of its location may also be one of Cardozo's greatest drawbacks. Space is a limiting factor anywhere in New York, and this rapidly growing school is naturally in need of more. Accordingly the administration is taking action by making plans to expand the library and office of admissions. However, housing remains a pressing issue for most students. While Cardozo does not provide it, an on-campus publication, "Roommates Wanted," offers roommate and apartment listings. Furthermore, Cardozo's location allows those who choose not to live in the