

Yale Law School

By Rachel Brauner

Founded in 1824, Yale Law School is one of the oldest and most revered institutions in our nation. A long history of distinguished professors and alumni as well as a tradition of academic excellence has characterized this institution as a cultivator for some of the most capable minds across the nation. Currently ranked by US World and News Report as the number one law school in the country, Yale serves as a standard for intellectual, educational, and professional opportunity.

The student body at Yale reflects the school's commitment to both diversity and scholastic excellence. Of the students presently enrolled, 43 percent are women, and 30 percent identify themselves as part of a minority group. Though a diverse student body remains a priority, Yale does not employ affirmative action policies. According to Director of Admissions Jean Webb, one can expect Yale law students to be "bright, capable and ambitious." Students hail from 45 states, 26 foreign countries, and retain degrees from 174 different colleges and universities from across America and around the world. All of these students are of the highest academic caliber, averaging an LSAT score of 172 and an undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) of 3.88. Out of the 3,576 students that made up last year's applicant pool, 7 percent were granted admission.

While representatives of the Office of Admissions acknowledge the relatively high LSAT scores and UGPA's of Yale law students, they maintain that these numbers serve solely as indicators of potential academic achievement and are by no means the only or most important criteria by which applicants are measured. This is supported by the wide range in the scores of accepted students. For example, a profile of the entering class of 1996 shows that students earned LSAT scores ranging from 155 to 180 and UGPA's ranging from a 3.0 to a 4.0. Also noteworthy is the fact that the admissions committee takes into account the different grading practices at each undergraduate institution and uses the Law School Data Assembly Service Report in an attempt to equalize the standards by which comparisons are made. This confirms that the school does emphasize other signs of distinction, such as leadership roles, involvement in school publications, prior work experience, and letters of recommendation.

Columbia University students have historically contributed significantly to both Yale's application pool and its student body. In 1997, 17 Columbia College students and 2 Barnard College students enrolled in Yale Law School. Webb affirmed that students endowed with an undergraduate education from Columbia have "typically fared very well here," as do almost all law students at Yale.

The academic program at Yale is unique and designed to dually serve as professional preparation and intellectual stimulation. There is room for choice when studying at Yale. Unlike most other law schools, Yale prescribes an educational program only during the first semester of study. The program consists of courses in Constitutional Law, Contracts, Procedure, and Torts; students are assigned to a small group in one of these subjects. Each course in this program integrates elementary

training in legal research and writing with regular course work. Besides additional required courses in both Criminal Law and Professional Responsibility, law students are free to decide which areas they wish to dedicate the remainder of their time.

Yale also offers a wide array of special programs to help guide students in their academic pursuits. The Law School supports joint degrees with other Yale graduate programs as well as with other graduate schools around the globe. Popular programs such as the International Human Rights Program send students abroad to receive an experiential understanding of their studies by giving them a chance to implement the fruits of their studies in the real world. Students also have the option to earn degrees of Doctor of the Science of Law, Master of Studies in Law, or Master of Laws.

One of the most compelling characteristics of a Yale education is the environment in which one receives it. Yale's incredibly small student-professor ratio, just under 10:1, allows for intimate relationships with both teachers and peers. The pressure of law school is also somewhat relieved by the grading system, which evaluates students on an honors-pass-fail system throughout their time at Yale. Yale also makes no effort to compute rankings, easing some of the competition which surely abounds there. Additionally, Yale is rather liberal in its approach to student involvement in curriculum, allowing students to initiate their own courses, independent reading and writing projects, and intensive semester-long projects in areas of special interest.

This relaxed attitude is also exhibited in the extracurricular options available at Yale. Law students publish several scholarly journals on a variety of subjects, from feminism to international law. Interestingly, students comprising the editorial boards of these publications, including the renowned Yale Law Review, are often selected through writing contests instead of through a traditional hierarchy or cutthroat competition. Students also participate in a variety of clinics providing pro-bono work in and around the New Haven area. Additionally, Yale students take part in a total of forty-seven student activities, ranging from the Yale Entertainment and Sports Law Association to *Habeas Chorus*, an exclusive singing group.

As for location, harbored in New Haven, Connecticut, some might say that the best part about Yale's location is that New York City is only an hour and a half away. Still, an admission's representative holds that, "New Haven enjoys outstanding cultural attractions for a city of its size." A number of first-rate museums, golf-courses, and parks are in the immediate area. In addition, New Haven houses two of the leading repertory theaters in the country. However, the real culture and entertainment in the city is primarily found on campus. There are regular performances by the various orchestras, choral groups, and theater troops on campus. There are also numerous lecture series featuring the latest research of Yale professors from all disciplines. Finally, due to its Ivy League standing, Yale is often visited by world-renowned scholars and performers throughout the year.

Life at Yale Law School is ideal in a number of ways. Students here can take advantage of excellent professors as well as a variety of academic options in a relaxed, uncompetitive environment. Students at Yale profit from attending an institution with a truly first-rate reputation, while simultaneously benefiting from its unique focus on intellectual, instead of merely professional advancement. As one student put it, "the hardest part is getting in! "