

## **Tips for Alumni Law School Applicants**

Law school is expensive, so proper planning will be necessary for you to achieve your goal of becoming an attorney. Before you begin applying for law school, spend time acquiring information and investigating financing options. The following suggestions can help you get started with this process.

### ***Obtain your credit report***

- Order your credit report through [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).
- Review your report carefully and check for errors and omissions.
- Make any necessary corrections as quickly as possible.

### ***Compile information on your debts***

- List each debt and include: total debt, minimum monthly payment, months remaining on the debt, and the interest rate.
- Total your debt and calculate your monthly payments.

### ***Calculate your current expenditures***

Include:

- Car insurance
- Health insurance
- Student loan payments
- Housing expenses
- Food
- Entertainment
- Auto loans
- Contribution to savings
- Expenses for your spouse, children, and/or other dependents

### ***Estimate law school expenses***

The financial aid budget from a law school can give you an estimate of tuition, fees, and room and board costs, but it will not include your current debts or expenses for your family. Also, the living expenses are estimated, or reflect an average for the nine months of law school and do not include summer expenses. When estimating law school expenses, take into account your ongoing debts and expenses that are not included in the financial aid budget.

### ***Estimate sources of income during your enrollment in law school***

The student financial aid office can help you with this task, and current law students can help you estimate housing and unseen expenses, such as parking or transportation.

Include:

- Scholarships
- Loans
- Earnings
- Gifts

Once you have made your calculations and estimates, you can begin to formulate your unique budget for law school. **Be modest** when estimating employment during law school, because only a small percentage of students obtain glamorous, high paying, and highly coveted summer clerkships.

### **Other Questions/Items to Ponder**

If you have children, you will need to look into childcare and school expenses for them. Will they attend public school or private school? If the children are in school, will they have expenses for sports and activities?

If you are married, will your spouse work while you are attending law school? What employment options are available for him or her?

What expenses can you reduce now in order to save money?\*\*\*

Do you have assets, such as a car, that you will not need in law school? Assess the value of your assets and determine whether you will liquidate them to help pay for law school.

If you have a 401(K) or other pension plan, do you plan to use the money for law school, or keep it in your account? If you plan to use the money, you might consider waiting until your second semester of law school, because your overall income tax may be lower.

How much will it cost to move to your new school? Include transportation expenses and the costs of setting up a new household. These costs can include utility deposits, first and last months' rent, connection fees, and license and registration fees.

What is the median starting salary of law school graduates from your school? What part of the country do they work in after graduation?

Where do you want to live after graduation? If you want to live in a small town, your future income will likely be less than lawyers in the big city, but your expenses may also be less. Be realistic in your forecasting.

Do you have student loans from undergraduate school? If you are currently making payments on student loans, contact your lenders to see if you are eligible for suspension of payments during law school. Not all loans qualify! Obtain the information you need to provide to your lender for deferment or forbearance.

Do you own a house or condo that you will need to sell? Start looking at your local real estate market now and determine expenses associated with a sale.

## **\*\*Reduce expenses before law school!**

Try to reduce your expenses before entering law school. Reducing your debts and obligations will make your shift into the law student lifestyle easier. Remember the adage, *“Live like a lawyer in law school, and you’ll live like a law student after you graduate.”*

Avoid making large expenditures for cars, furniture, expensive wardrobes, or extravagant vacations. If you currently own a high-end car, consider trading it in for a more economical model. Not only will you spend less each month on payments, but you will also save on car insurance each month, and, possibly, on fuel. Plan any vacations carefully in order to reduce costs.

If you have significant or numerous consumer debts, contact a financial institution to determine if you should obtain a consolidation loan. If you consolidate your debts, avoid charging a lot to your credit cards afterwards. Consolidation loans are not always the best option, so investigate carefully.

Examine your current monthly budget. Do you spend a lot of money eating out and on entertainment? Do you subscribe to magazines or organizations that you can live without? Take these easy steps to reduce your monthly expenses.