



UC Irvine's 2008 senior team advanced to the Mock Trial National Championship Tournament.

Preparing for a Career in Law

What is Prelaw?

To say that you are a “prelaw” student means that you are planning to apply to law school after completing your bachelor’s degree. Few universities in the United States offer a “prelaw” major because no particular undergraduate major is required for admission to law school.

To Prepare for Law School

The best academic preparation for law school is to do well in a major that you enjoy. Law schools want to produce attorneys who can serve the entire legal spectrum (in such diverse areas as tax, criminal, entertainment, or immigration law), and this requires a wide range of academic backgrounds. In fact, law schools look less for specific areas of study than they do for evidence of excellence in any academic program. A good record in physics or classics, for instance, is better than a mediocre record in history or political science. UC Irvine students who have gone on to law school most frequently have chosen majors within the schools of humanities, social sciences (which includes a major in political science with an emphasis on public law), or social ecology (which includes a major in criminology, law and society). The majority of law schools, however, give equal preference to students from all academic disciplines.

At UC Irvine, take courses that will help develop your writing and analytical skills (logic, writing, and statistics courses, for example). These skills are the key to doing well on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), succeeding in law school, and being successful in the legal profession. In addition to hundreds of courses that will help build writing and analytical skills, UCI offers programs and law-related courses that students in any major may take.

- The School of Humanities offers courses in logic, the philosophy of law, American legal history, liberalism, law and literature, rhetoric, law and minorities in the U.S., legal theory, and race and gender.
- The School of Social Sciences offers courses in constitutional law, civil rights, civil liberties, intellectual property, economics of law, international law and international relations, judicial behavior, and a variety of political science courses. The School of Social Sciences also sponsors the annual publication of UC Irvine’s undergraduate Law Forum Journal.

- The School of Social Ecology offers courses in law and social change, law and society, criminal law, contemporary legal issues, legal sanctions and social control, psychology and law, and environmental law.

The Schools of Social Ecology and Social Sciences also offer the opportunity to apply theories learned in the classroom to actual social problems. Field study and internship placements are available in many areas, including the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, the Orange County Public Defender’s Office, private law firms, and within the judicial system.

Humanities and Law Minor

The School of Humanities offers a humanities and law minor that brings together coursework useful in preparation for law-related careers. Emphasizing reading, writing, and critical-thinking skills, and humanistic approaches to problems of law and society, this classic liberal arts minor can be taken in tandem with a major in any field, humanistic or otherwise. The curriculum includes a set of courses that develops skills in critical reading, writing, and analysis that are necessary to deal with legal issues. Another set presents theoretical and analytical perspectives on ethical, political, and social issues relevant to the law. A final set focuses on specific legal issues from a humanistic perspective. Lower-division requirements primarily develop foundation skills in the first set, whereas upper-division requirements build on these skills by addressing the concerns from the other sets. For further information, see www.humanities.uci.edu/undergrad.

Law Forum and Law Forum Journal

The School of Social Sciences invites students throughout campus to apply for membership in Law Forum, an academic certificate program. The Law Forum provides an intellectual and practical exploration of modern law through coursework, discussion gatherings with members of the legal profession, and hands-on legal research projects. Members take part in the small-group

“Advocacy” course to hone effective presentation techniques, as well as the capstone “Law in the 21st Century” course to explore various social and ethical challenges facing members of the judiciary and the modern legal profession. Law Forum members also have the opportunity to serve as staff editors or editorial board members for UCI’s undergraduate Law Forum Journal. This academic publication provides a showcase for legal research papers selected from a campuswide pool of submissions. Students completing the Law Forum’s program requirements are awarded a certificate of recognition at an annual event each spring. Given law’s profound impact on modern politics, culture and community, the program helps prepare students not only for possible legal careers, but more importantly to be informed, effective citizens. For further information, see www.socsci.uci.edu/lawforum.

Consider Alternatives to the Legal Profession

A second consideration in selecting your undergraduate major is the potential of an alternative career opportunity should you not be accepted into law school, change your mind about your career goals, or, at a later date, decide law really is not for you. When choosing a major at UCI, think about careers other than law that may follow from your major. Academic and career counselors can provide guidance in this area.

To Learn More About the Legal Profession

You can become more familiar with the legal profession by talking with lawyers, law students, and law school representatives. UCI’s campuswide Prelaw Society, a student organization, as well as the Schools of Social Ecology and Social Sciences invite lawyers and judges to campus to present lectures and participate in discussions. Several lawyers and judges also serve on the social ecology and social science faculty. Internships also allow students to gain practical experience and insight into the legal profession. The UCI Career Center maintains listings of such opportunities, as well as names of UCI alumni who can talk to students about their experiences in law school and as attorneys, and each fall, several law schools participate in UCI’s Graduate and Professional School Information Day.

What Law Schools Look for in Applicants

Law schools look closely at five areas:

1. The higher your grades are, the better, because entrance to law schools is a very competitive process. An excessive number of courses taken on a pass/not pass basis could be detrimental because they are not precise indications of your accomplishments.
2. Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) results. Again, the higher your score, the better. The test assesses

your reading comprehension, logical reasoning, and writing ability. A copy of your response to the writing portion of the test will be sent to each law school to which you apply.

3. A statement that you write about yourself as part of the law school application, usually covering why you want to study law and pursue a career in it, as well as what attributes you have that you believe will help you succeed in the field.

4. In-depth letters of recommendation from people who know you and your abilities are also required. Professors who are familiar with your undergraduate work can be a good source of strong letters of recommendation.

5. Your extracurricular activities and work experience. You will be at an advantage if, in addition to strength in the four areas above, you have law-related work experience or have shown leadership abilities by participating in campus and community activities and organizations.

Law Schools Within the University of California

There are several law schools within the University of California system — at Berkeley (Boalt Hall), Davis, and Los Angeles — as well as the UC-affiliated Hastings College of Law in San Francisco. The University of California, Irvine School of Law has opened for our first class of students in fall 2009. These schools do not favor applicants from one college over another. Rather, like any graduate program, they are impressed by good work done at a demanding college.

For More Advice

Your academic counselor and faculty advisor will help you plan an academic program that will strengthen the skills you need for law school. They also can help answer your questions about the study of law and law school admissions requirements.

Additional sources of information are the UCI Prelaw Society, and the Career Center, which has a prelaw advisor and a library of resources related to the field of law. Another helpful resource is the Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools, published by the Law School Admission Council in cooperation with the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools. The guide includes descriptions of law schools, chapters describing various aspects of the legal profession, and information on preparing for and applying to law school. A copy of the publication can be found in the UCI Career Center or in most large libraries, or can be ordered from the Law School Admission Council.

Mock Trial

Students in Mock Trial engage in trial simulation competitions with teams from all over the country where they develop critical thinking and public speaking skills, as well as knowledge of legal practices and procedures. UCI’s team is quickly becoming a force with which to be reckoned on the national scene. Entering its fifth season for academic year 2009-2010, the team has made it to nationals twice, finishing 8th in the country last year. For further information, please visit <http://irvinemocktrial.com/>.

Additional Information

Law School Admission Council

662 Penn Street
Newton, PA 18940-0998
Telephone: (215) 968-1001
www.lsac.org

UCI Career Center

100 Student Services I
University of California
Irvine, CA 92697-2075
Telephone: (949) 824-6881
www.career.uci.edu

Admissions and Relations with Schools

204 Aldrich Hall
University of California
Irvine, CA 92697-1075
Telephone: (949) 824-6703
www.admissions.uci.edu

General Campus Information

Telephone: (949) 824-5011
www.uci.edu

UCI General Catalogue

UCI Bookstore
Telephone: (949) 824-2665
www.book.uci.edu
www.editor.uci.edu/catalogue (PDF Version)

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Campus Safety: Pursuant to the Federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, UCI annually makes available to the public statistics on reported occurrences of criminal activity on and off campus and at UCI Medical Center at www.police.uci.edu/awareness/jca.html.

Nondiscrimination Policy: The University of California, in accordance with applicable Federal and State law and University policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services. The University also prohibits sexual harassment. This nondiscrimination policy covers admission, access, and treatment in University programs and activities. For more information, call (949) 824-5594.