

MOUNT HOLYOKE

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Phone 413-538-2080/Fax 413-538-2081

Pre-Law at Mount Holyoke

Frequently Asked Questions

Do you need to be a pre-law major to apply to law school?

No, nor do law schools encourage “criminal justice” or similar “pre-professional” majors. Students from all academically rigorous majors apply - and get into - good law schools. Mount Holyoke students heading for law school pursue their academic interests in any of the many liberal arts disciplines offered -- whether those interests are in biology, economics, anthropology, English or political science. Generally, students who study what they love excel at it, which is important for law school admissions.

What kind of support does Mount Holyoke provide to pre-law students?

Students pursue their academic interests in the law through their course selections, and discuss them with their academic advisors. In addition, students are encouraged to make an appointment with the pre-law advisor in the Career Development Center early to discuss their plans. They participate in law school workshops and information sessions, and attend alumnae panels and career chats. Often they explore law-related careers through summer and January internships (funding for unpaid internships, volunteering, or “shadowing” is available on a competitive basis). The student run pre-law society organizes events and provides peer support. The Alumnae Association facilitates mentoring relationships between current students and alumnae; students are urged to fully explore this wonderful resource. When students are ready to apply to law school, whether as seniors or as alumnae, we offer test preparation, application feedback, a credentials service, and other assistance.

What are the most important criteria for getting into law school?

Law school admissions are very numbers driven. The two most important factors are applicants’ LSAT scores and their grade point average (GPA). As with other graduate school applications, students’ academic programs should reflect breadth, depth and significant intellectual rigor. Mount Holyoke’s distribution requirements, major and minor programs and the emphasis on speaking, arguing and writing throughout the curriculum ensure that graduates are highly competitive in law school admissions.

What is the LSAT, and how should students prepare for it?

The Law School Admissions Test is a standardized exam offered four times a year. No particular content is tested, rather, the exam tests analytical reasoning, reading, and writing skills. Because a student’s score is one of the two major criteria used for admission (and at times for financial aid), students must take the time and effort to prepare to the best of their abilities. Some students are able to prepare well independently. Others enroll in commercial exam preparation courses. The Career Development Center helps familiarize students with the format of the exam early, and partners with Kaplan to offer affordable LSAT preparation for all interested MHC students and alumnae.

How many MHC students go to law school?

MHC’s law school matriculation rates reflect national trends: most graduates choose to take a year or two to pursue other interests before going to law school. They may work at law firms or in the business world, study or travel abroad, teach, volunteer, or devote themselves to politics. Law schools value candidates with this kind of experience. Nationally, the average age of matriculating students is 25. In the 2005-06 application cycle 70 students with a Mount Holyoke degree applied to law school. Seventeen of those applicants were seniors.

Where do Mount Holyoke students enroll?

Students apply to a wide range of schools across the nation. Recent MHC graduates have matriculated at Boston University, Boston College, Cornell, Northeastern, Yale, Emory, Stanford, University of California Berkeley, Duke, University of Connecticut, William and Mary, Villanova, University of Minnesota, and many others.