

Adjusting Expectations: Proper Preparation and Timing of the Law School Application

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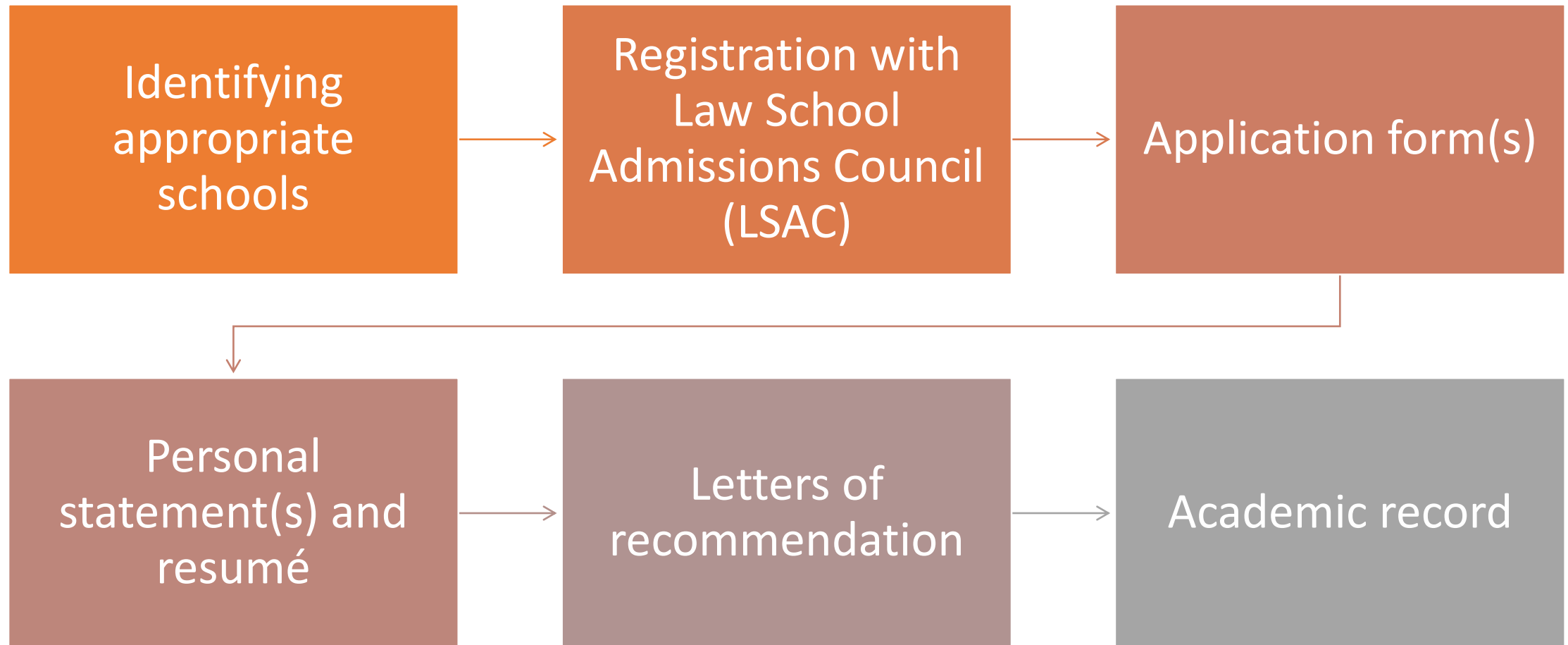
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INDIGENOUS LAW AND POLICY CENTER

Major Components of the Application Process



Identifying Appropriate Schools (For the Student)

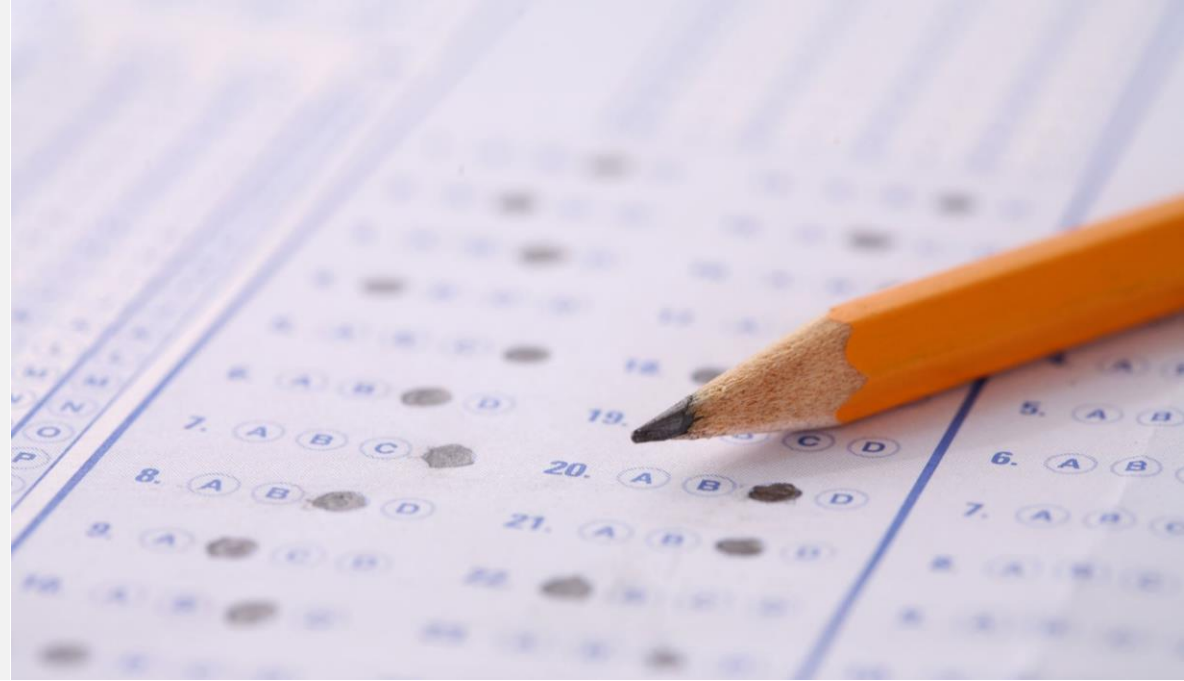
- About 12 months ahead of applying, applicants should research schools and their different programs
- At this point, applicant should note key information:
 - Median LSAT scores/ GPA
 - Application & scholarship deadlines
 - Application fees
 - If the school offers an application fee waiver & how to qualify

Registering with Law School Admissions Council (LSAC)

- All law school applicants must register with LSAC
- LSAC is the place to:
 - Register for the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)
 - Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS)
- Applicants should plan to register for LSAC at least 6-9 months before applying to law school—why??
- LSAC offers fee waivers for its services for applicants who meet certain requirements, but this process takes time!



Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)



- Applicants **must** begin preparing for this test **no later than six months** prior to applying to law school
- There are several prep programs, including the free Khan Academy service—but these programs take time!
- Applicants should take the LSAT 3-6 months before they plan to apply to law school
- Applicants **should not** plan to take it within the 3-month mark*

Credential Assembly Service (CAS)

- Service that processes applicant:
 - Transcript
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Electronic applications for LSAC member schools
- CAS prepares an official report containing ACTUAL GPA and LSAT scores with other data for admissions officials
- Each school the applicant applies to will require a CAS report

Associated Costs—LSAT & CAS

LSAT test

\$200 per
test

CAS
registration fee

\$195

CAS report

\$45
($\$45 \times 9 = \405)

LSAC Fee Waiver

- Applicants may apply for this fee waiver by showing:
 - Citizenship/residence status; and
 - Financial need
- Applicants apply through the LSAC
- This process may take some time!

LSAC Fee Waiver Includes:

- (2) LSATs within a 2-year period
- (1) LSAT Writing
- (1) CAS registration—including the Letter of Recommendation Service & access to electronic applications for all LSAC-member law schools
- (6) CAS Law School Reports (available only after final approval of an LSAC fee waiver)

Application Forms

- The easy part!
- Mostly online
- Students fill in basic information on school's application form
- May include questions to help determine whether a student is eligible for a scholarship

Associated Costs—Applications

- Average law school application → \$60-\$100
- Some math: a student who applies to nine schools is looking at \$540 to \$900 in application fees
- However, some schools waive fees for:
 - Native students
 - Any student who received an LSAC fee waiver (different than the CAS waiver fee)
- Applicants may want to contact individual institutions for information on institutional fee waivers

Personal Statement(s) and Resumé

- School websites generally list the types of personal statement(s) students will have to write
 - Some are guided essays
 - Some invite diversity statements and addenda
- Students should begin working on these no later than 3 months from the date of application
- Best practice: encourage students to work closely with a mentor and/or attend a session at a writing center

Letters of Recommendation

- Applicant should ask for good letters of recommendation at least three months ahead of applying
- Good letter of recommendation = the recommender knows the student and can speak to that applicant's ability to do well in law school
- Best practice: encourage students to set earlier deadlines for the recommenders to allow room for error (i.e. applicant plans to apply October 1, so they tell the recommender it is due September 15)

Academic Record

- Applicant will need to send all academic records to CAS
- Important: this includes community college and study abroad transcripts
- Applicants will want to allow time to both allow the issuing institution to prepare the record and for CAS to enter it
- This may cost students—depending on the issuing institution

Suggested Timeline Before Submitting Applications

12 months

Research programs and requirements
Reach out with any questions about programs
Attend pre-law/
Pipeline events

9 months

Begin LSAT test prep
•Narrow list to nine schools

6 months

Register on LSAC website for LSAT and CAS
Take LSAT

3 months

Prepare personal statements and resumes
Retrieve any information on criminal records
Request letters of recommendation

Why is this timeline important?

Applying to 9 schools
at cost

Approximately \$1550-\$1920

Applying to 9 schools
with LSAC fee waiver

Approximately \$150

Why is this timeline important?

- Preparation is the make or break in law school admissions
- Applicants should begin to prepare and complete applications as early in the application process as possible
- Optimal application time: October-December
- The early bird gets the worm—applicants see the best results the earlier they apply

What if an applicant just learns about law school and decides to apply?

- Without prior preparation, the circumstances may not be the best idea
- Realistic conversation on whether this cycle is the best idea—maybe waiting until next year when they've had time to prepare would be better
- Realistic conversation on programs available to Native American applicants:
 - Pipeline to Law
 - Pre-Law Summer Institute

Questions?

Feel free to reach out at: roemerne@law.msu.edu!