

## How to Best Utilize Your Prelaw Advisor: Part 3

*Podcast Transcript*

**Troy:** Thank you, Vielka. That was great advice. How often do you recommend students visit their prelaw advisors once they've identified who they are?

**Vielka:** I recommend that students meet with their prelaw advisors at least once a semester during the early part of their academic careers—that is, during their freshman and sophomore years. Freshman and sophomore prelaw students primarily need to get plugged into sources of information—information about prelaw programs, speaker series, special scholarship opportunities, and internships. And additionally, they need to get a basic grounding in how to create a strong law school application portfolio, including the importance of a strong GPA and a competitive LSAT score. They need to know about how to choose a major and minor to support the critical thinking skills that they'll be using. They need to learn about cultivating relationships with faculty who will provide good references, and they need to know about the importance of a personal statement and the rigors of law school and legal careers. My advice differs dramatically from that—from that advice for students in the last two years of their academic career. That is, primarily I'm speaking about juniors and seniors. There I would expect that seniors and juniors are having much more frequent meetings with their prelaw advisor. I will find myself very frequently working quite intensively with students on their personal statements, for example, or the addendum that they're working on for their application process and will meet several times during the course of a single semester.

**Troy:** Hmm. Very good, very good. In your opinion, what are the most important benefits a student can gain from his or her prelaw advisor?

**Vielka:** Sure, I think I could boil it down to a small handful. I think among the most important benefits to be gained from working with a prelaw advisor are insight about the rigors and joys, frankly also, of law school and the legal profession. Access to information about the array of legal practice areas. Very often students are unaware of the huge range of areas of legal practice. Access to information about specialized prep programs or internships, on and off campus, that'll help the student develop the critical thinking skills that they'll need to perform well on the LSAT but also during that first year of law school. Also, coaching, I think, is really important—coaching regarding the importance of understanding and listening to a student's own value system regarding the

law school selection process. Support, also, for their dream of going to law school, and frankly, this is true especially of some students for whom friends and/or family are perhaps less informed and/or less supportive than they might be. And I would say, finally, probably insight into—insight into expectations regarding the high academic achievement for law school—law school applicants.

**Troy:** Vielka, I agree with you 100 percent on those benefits. Thank you. Are there any tips that you would give to a student who is unsure whether he or she should pursue a career in law?

**Vielka:** Well, I will say this: Law school and a legal career can be very challenging, so it's very important for students to really explore whether they're comfortable committing to the demands of law school and a legal career. I would speak to your prelaw advisor about opportunities to meet with lawyers and observe lawyers carrying out their duties. This can be done also in the form of informational interviews. You might identify, through your prelaw advisor, opportunities for mentoring relationships or law student-shadowing programs. All of these give prelaw students an opportunity to examine up close the real life of lawyers, not just what's on, perhaps, to date myself, *L.A. Law* or, you know, more currently *Boston Legal*. That's fantasy; that's TV, and it's enjoyable. But it's not what lawyers actually do, and it's so important for law students—prelaw students, pardon me—especially those who are not sure that they're ready to commit to that path, to really explore what real lawyers actually do and how they function. Law career—a law career can be just incredibly satisfying and rewarding, but it's really important to know that you actually are interested in and able to perform the task that will be required of you. Lawyers are, you know, at base, Troy, at some level, lawyers are researchers and writers and critical thinkers and leaders, frankly. And you need to make sure that you really enjoy using those skills—that you love to read, that you really enjoy writing, and that you're a really strong researcher.

**Troy:** I couldn't have said that better myself, Vielka. Thank you, thank you. And thank you to the DiscoverLaw.org registrants listening in. Please visit the site for a new podcast, and be sure to tell your friends to visit the site as well. Until next time.