2012

Aspire

University of Michigan Law School

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Aspire

Michigan Law
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL
Greetings!

Beginning in the fall of 2008, the legal industry—along with the rest of the U.S. economy—underwent a significant contraction. In the following 18 months, by some estimates, the largest law firms laid off almost 6,000 attorneys and deferred the starting dates of about 3,500 new hires. More than ever, prospective law students need answers to two questions: "Is law school worth my money?" and "Can I trust this particular law school to get me where I want to go?" For those considering Michigan Law, we believe the answer to both questions is a resounding "Yes."

To be sure, no law school escaped the impact entirely. Michigan Law’s reputation for training bright lawyers to have both theoretical acumen and practical skills has been a distinct advantage during this difficult period, and our graduates’ reputation for combining their considerable skill sets with a collegial attitude offers enduring appeal to employers. But, simply put, fewer lawyers were being hired, and even our grads who had no interest in working at "BigLaw" saw the hiring pools for government, public-interest, and smaller law-firm jobs in secondary markets become more competitive. Many of our students experienced longer job searches and the anxiety borne of uncertainty and fewer opportunities.

In the wake of the economic crisis we recognized the need to up our career-counseling game and worked to:

- expand counseling hours and diversify our expertise
- increase career-development programming
- provide postgraduate opportunities that facilitate entry into new markets
- maximize our powerful alumni network

We’ve seen real success with these enhancements, but we believe a student’s job search is a team effort. The time to start thinking seriously about the specific path your career might take is now, before you even enroll. Beginning in your 1L year at Michigan, we will work with you individually and in groups to help you develop your career strategy. We will help you identify which curricular and extracurricular experiences you should pursue, both in order to explore your interests and to position yourself well. We will help you develop an accurate sense of what fields and markets are likely to be optimal matches. You will likewise have to work with us to explore your goals, and to begin the hard work of narrowing your broad interests. Over your three years here, our conversations will become increasingly focused and concrete.

Today, we see unmistakable improvements in the legal market. Increasing numbers of firms want to recruit on campus or post positions to hire our graduates; students are reporting more employment choices. The tough market conditions have offered valuable lessons, however, and we will continue our robust support services for student career exploration and job placement. We are committed to maintaining the Michigan difference.

Sincerely,

Sarah C. Zearfoss, '92
Senior Assistant Dean for Admissions, Financial Aid, and Career Planning
Michigan Law is your place.
All the difference in the world

The University of Michigan Law School holds a unique place among the foremost centers of legal education in the world. For students seriously interested in meaningful careers in legal practice, the academy, public policy, or a plethora of other options, the mental discipline demonstrated by a Michigan Law degree can make all the difference. Members of Michigan Law's world-renowned faculty combine scholarly excellence with substantive legal practice preparation—a powerful combination for a wide array of legal career paths.

The information and the personal stories in the pages of this publication demonstrate the flexibility and value of a Michigan degree—and all the places in the world it can take you.
Midwestern roots, global range: The perfect springboard for any job

Some believe that students should choose a law school that’s close to where they want to practice. But in this respect as in so many others, Michigan is different. Michigan Law’s roots in the Midwest make the ideal springboard for jobs in major legal markets on both coasts and every region of the country. We have a long history of geographic spread, sending graduates to about 35 states on average every year—with the most popular markets being New York, Chicago, California (both Los Angeles and San Francisco), and Washington, D.C. Our graduates are sought after by BigLaw (those mega firms with 750-plus attorneys), large and medium-size firms across the country, boutique firms specializing in particular practice areas, public interest, government, the judiciary, and organizations outside the law for which legal thinking and familiarity is an enormous asset.

But certainly many of our graduates find top jobs right here in Michigan. Michigan’s governor is one such graduate, as are two of the last four state bar presidents, and the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. Some grads decide Ann Arbor is too perfect a place to leave behind, and establish thriving careers in private practice right here.
Michigan is different.
What stands out to me about Michigan Law is that the administration and staff are very, very focused on the students. Career Planning knows your name and facilitates interviews based on helping you understand the type of firm that is best for your goals and personality. Even after you’ve accepted a job, they’ll email you out of the blue about some matter of interest. My friends at other law schools do not see this degree of personal attention.

My two summer internships at Weil, Gotshal & Manges led to a permanent job offer. Then, Weil offered a voluntary deferral program to work with Legal Aid Los Angeles. While participating in U-M’s Child Advocacy Law Clinic, I became fascinated with family law and jumped at this opportunity to do direct client services so early in my career. In LA, I’ll also be working with survivors of domestic violence. It’s extremely difficult to see people confronting such problems, but it can also be inspirational. As an attorney, you learn a lot about being strong through hard times by watching clients. And there’s no such opportunity for policy changes.

Since Weil has offices in both states, I’ll become a Bar member of both California and New York. I grew up in Oakland, CA, and love the Bay area, but I also always believed my career would take me to New York. One reason I picked Michigan is that it places more people on the East Coast than the West Coast schools do, and places more people on the West Coast than the East Coast schools.

When you say you went to Michigan, people get so excited. The managing partner of my law firm burst into “Hail to the Victors,” singing it loudly. What could I do? I sang along!

Danielle Barns
BA, University of Pennsylvania

A Michigan degree is highly portable, not confined to a regional area dominated by one or a handful of law schools. Here’s what some recent research revealed. We send people to an average of 35 states at graduation. For summer employment, people spread out even farther, going to between 37 and 44 states. About one in five students goes to three different markets during the course of their time at Michigan Law, and most go to at least two different states.

The result of all this national placement? An energized and visible alumni network that is second to none, and more than 20,650 strong.
Individualized career counseling.
A wide world of opportunity

Career Planning at Michigan Law

We’re here for our students even before they become our students; our emphasis on one-on-one counseling begins during the admissions process and never ends. Our career planning attorney-counselors are always available to help you decide on the type of career uniquely suited to your talents, personality, and interests. (Michigan Law’s recognized strength in such in-demand legal specialties as international, environmental, constitutional and civil rights, intellectual property, and business law, combined with our exceptional clinical offerings and a strong emphasis on legal writing, may make that decision a difficult one. Don’t worry. We can help you think that through.)

Talking shop
Students who work with us and participate in some of our many programs routinely tell us it makes an enormous difference in their job searches. We network with employers in every sector of the law; even during the economic downturn, hundreds of employers came to campus as part of last year’s On Campus Interview week. We review resumes and cover letters. We sponsor career-related workshops to hone particular skill areas. We offer mock interviews, and work with alumni mentors who help students prepare stand-out answers to typical interview questions. In short, we work with students to be as strategic as possible in their summer and postgraduate job searches.

What do you get when you combine these career services with Michigan’s reputation for excellence and its national alumni network? A highly competitive career placement track record.

Michigan has:

• Seven attorney-counselors, all of whom have practiced law, as well as two alumni counselors with expertise in discrete areas, to provide career advice

• Specific, career-related programs to help hone job search skills

• Frequent fellowship workshops, employer meet-and-greets, and lunch-time speaker series featuring acknowledged leaders in their fields

• JobNet, a worldwide database of public interest and government internships, permanent positions, and postgraduate fellowships

• An active, worldwide network of more than 20,650 alumni, available for advice on job searches

• Frequent opportunities to connect with alumni both individually and in larger group settings
An array of career paths

Pursuing public interest at Michigan Law

At Michigan Law, we never forget that we’re a public institution, proud to give back to the communities we serve. Public service is part of our DNA. That’s one reason students find opportunities everywhere they look: from immigration legal services to wildlife protection to indigent criminal and civil rights defense, among many others. Michigan Law is dedicated to:

- Building and fostering a robust public interest community of alumni, students, and faculty;
- Providing students with hands-on experience during the school year;
- Making it financially possible for students to pursue a career in public service.

To help you find your path, our Office of Career Planning features among its staff members, in addition to generalist attorney-counselors, a government advisor, a judicial clerkship advisor, and a director of public interest with a focus on nonprofit employers, as well as part-time alumni counselors with particular expertise in fellowships and in criminal law.

At Michigan, students find a supportive community among their classmates. Student groups, such as the Organization of Public Interest Students, offer peer mentor programs, develop their own pro bono and community service projects, and host numerous programs throughout the year. Michigan Law also boasts a community of more than 1,700 alumni worldwide who work in public service, including a network of more than 800 alumni who have eagerly volunteered to counsel students exploring public service opportunities.

Narrowing the pay gap

But our commitment goes deeper than rigorous legal training and unparalleled assistance in landing the perfect public service job. With public service salaries typically less than those in the private sector, our graduates pursuing these careers benefit from a recently revamped Debt Management Program that is among the most progressive in the country.

Additionally, three selected graduates pursuing a government career earn Michigan Law Fiske Fellowships, which offer a cash stipend and repayment of all educational debt while a Fellow. A Public Service Guarantee offers a summer stipend of up to $5,000 for all 2Ls who obtain summer internships with qualified government or public interest organizations, and a newly bolstered Dean’s Public Service Fellowship program provides a $7,000 stipend to 1Ls of qualified public service interns.
Michigan has:

- A Public Service Guarantee that offers a summer stipend of up to $5,000 for 2Ls who obtain internships with qualified government or public interest organizations.

- A prestigious track record as one of only three schools with at least one Skadden Fellowship every year for more than a decade. Skadden is widely recognized as the most competitive public service fellowship in the country.

- Students and alumni who are annually offered public interest fellowships from Equal Justice Works, Fulbright-Hays, Luce, and Echoing Green.

- Consistently placed about 10% of graduates in government and public interest positions at graduation.
During my first month at Michigan Law, I attended the Environmental Law and Policy Program’s conference, and it immediately captured my attention. Rather than focusing on a particular environmental issue like clean air or global warming, I’m broadly interested in defining the role that government should play in solving environmental problems.

I’ve met regularly with the same counselor in Career Planning since my first year, and she has helped me on both the macro and micro level, from “What region should I focus on in my summer job search?” to “What details should I include on my resume?” She also put me in touch with the director of public interest for specialized help in public interest and public service careers.

The counselors advised me that if I wanted a career in environmental law, it was time to put my stamp on it. My job search led to a summer internship with the National Wildlife Federation in Ann Arbor. Next summer, to diversify my experience, I’ll be working for the Environmental Protection Agency Office of Regional Counsel in Philadelphia.

The faculty is also a great resource in helping students define their career goals and find employment. My professors were instrumental in leading me to each of my summer positions. Also, the student community is very supportive. No matter your interests, you can find like-minded classmates who have held positions similar to the ones you are seeking, and who will enthusiastically offer you their knowledge and experience.

In sum, I think the Law School does a very fine job in helping students find their way. I came here without a firm grasp of how I would use my degree; now I’m halfway through, and I have a clear idea of the kind of legal career I intend to pursue, and the measures necessary to pursue it.

Entrepreneur program

What do budding entrepreneurs need most (aside from confidence, drive, and venture capital)? Lawyers. Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, anyone?

It’s a hands-on world out there in the legal workplace, and Michigan Law students selected for this year’s inaugural class of the school’s Entrepreneurship Clinic are finding out just how hands-on it is.

Drawing on business ideas created in the University of Michigan’s top-ranked medical, business, and engineering schools—as well as in every other part of the Ann Arbor campus, including the Law School itself—the law students in the clinic protect intellectual property interests, form proper business entities, and conduct the myriad other legal tasks associated with launching a new business. At the same time, the clinic gives law students the real-life experience they need to facilitate entrepreneurial growth after they graduate Law School.

The clinic, a key component in the Law School’s Zell Entrepreneurship and Law Program, is taught by Prof. Bryce Pilz, ’01, who earned an undergraduate degree in engineering from the University as well.

“Top schools like Michigan used to be feeders for established companies,” Pilz said, “but students now are much more entrepreneurial. We’re going to have a lot of great clients to work with, because the talent is here. It’s always been here.”
Stellar career placement.
Phenomenal experiences.
Fellowships

For over seven years, Michigan Law has offered Postgraduate Fellowships to provide a bridge to full-time, permanent legal employment. The Fellowships enable students to acquire experience and develop a professional network leading to desirable post-Fellowship positions, with Law School financial support (with awards of up to $4,000 for up to 12 weeks of work in 2010 and 2011). Any of our 3Ls who has not obtained an offer for a postgraduate job at the time of graduation, and who wishes to work with an eligible nonprofit organization or government office that has at least one attorney on staff to supervise the Fellow, is eligible.

As one graduate wrote, who secured a post-Fellowship position at a state Attorney General's Office over stiff competition:

I really, really wanted to pursue a career in the public sector, and the Postgraduate Fellowship program was definitely central to making that possible. There were over 270 applicants, and they interviewed 18, the vast majority of whom had more experience than I do. Had I not already been working here [as a Postgraduate Fellow] and proving that I could litigate against more experienced attorneys, there is no way I would have been seriously considered.

The permanent positions vary. For the class of 2010, 61 graduates obtained a Fellowship. Of the 53 who remained in communication with the Office of Career Planning, 27 obtained permanent post-Fellowship legal employment with government or public interest agencies, 12 began work as law firm associates, 4 went into business, and 3 accepted federal judicial clerkships. The remaining 7 were still seeking permanent employment at the close of their Fellowship: 3 held legal positions that were either part-time or not permanent; 2 continued their education in another field; and 2 remained unemployed.

For the class of 2011—the class believed to be hardest-hit by the contriction in legal employment, because of a dramatic decrease in the size of summer-associate classes in 2010—75 students were awarded Postgraduate Fellowships. At the nine-month mark for accumulation of final NALP data, 8 were still in their funded Fellowship positions, which is why reason to believe will result—as did the great majority of 2010 Fellowships—in long-term legal positions. Of the remaining 67 graduates, 54 had moved to permanent positions while 13 remained unemployed.
A judicial clerkship has an unparalleled opportunity to learn how to persuade a judge...by sitting at the judge’s right elbow and seeing what persuades him or her, which oral arguments work, and how a case gets built from the ground up. Clerks read briefs, attend court proceedings, write bench memoranda, analyzing the parties’ arguments, advise the judge on the disposition of a case, and draft opinions. In addition to providing an invaluable learning experience, judges usually become lifelong mentors to their clerks. And their fellow clerks—including those who clerked for the judge before you and those who will come after—form a lifelong professional network. Legal employers understand and respect the incomparable experience a clerkship provides, so that a clerkship markedly enhances your future employment opportunities, whether you want to be a litigator, a transactional lawyer, or an academic. It’s the gift that keeps on giving.

Michigan Law is committed to helping students and graduates obtain judicial clerkships. Our school has a seasoned faculty advisor and full-time staff member in the Office of Career Planning to help students navigate what can be a challenging process. Students interested in seeing if a clerkship is right for them work directly with the advisor to set up individual clerkship searches. Further, more than 50 percent of the faculty have served as law clerks and are available as mentors and advisors throughout the process. Typically, 15–20 percent of our students accept clerkships, and a growing number of graduates are accepting clerkships a few years after graduating. Michigan graduates regularly serve as judicial clerks in federal and state appellate and trial courts. Michigan Law alumni are consistently found clerking in 12 of the 13 circuits in any given year. And in the past 10 years, Michigan Law has sent 14 clerks to the Supreme Court of the United States. Our graduates also clerk internationally.
Superbly trained scholars.
Faculty mentors.
Courted by the academy

At Michigan Law, we produce more than just superbly trained lawyers to work in private practice and public service. We also produce superbly trained scholars to work in the legal academy. In fact, Michigan Law has a group of faculty members specifically dedicated to advising students seeking academic careers. Historically, we’re among the top five institutions supplying law faculty both here and abroad.

Few people know they wish to pursue an academic career when they first ponder going to law school, but many law students get excited about a possible career in legal academia once they begin taking classes, reading law, and interacting with their professors and fellow students.

For those eager to learn the path to an academic career, the key is laying the right groundwork. It is important, of course, to do well in law school, but our faculty—and the market for legal academics—rejects the idea that it’s only possible if you’re on law review or tops in your class or have a prestigious clerkship under your belt.

Today, more than ever, teaching candidates are judged primarily on their ability to make important contributions to legal scholarship. Fine-tuning this ability requires lots of interaction with your law professors, mastering the relevant literatures, lots of writing, and immersing yourself in the network of intellectuals working in your fields of interest.

To begin this process, and to help students interested in academia find kindred spirits and connect with their law professors, the Law School offers the Student Research Roundtable. The roundtable meets approximately 10 times a year, and provides students with the opportunity to present their own original research to each other and to their professor-advisers. Students not only learn to discuss and defend their own ideas in an academic setting, but they also develop the ability to engage with and constructively critique the work of others.
After my first semester at UC Berkeley, I realized I wasn’t ready for college. I was young; I wanted to check out the world. The best way I could see to do it was to get in a car and drive. Over the next several years, I lived in and traveled through Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, New Mexico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington. Eight years later, living in Tucson as a single mom, I realized it was time to go back to school. I started at the local community college and finished with a degree in anthropology from the University of Arizona in 2007. But what was next? At that point, I was ready to do something practical. After taking a practice LSAT and scoring well, I took a courtroom clerk job and decided that law school was for me.

I applied broadly. I was admitted to the University of Arizona with a full scholarship, but I wanted to go to a school with a stronger national reputation—one that could take me anywhere. I visited schools in New York, Berkeley, and Chicago, but when I got to Ann Arbor, it just felt right. Plus, my daughter was 11 at the time; I didn’t want to move her across the country to live in a tiny, expensive apartment in a huge city. In Ann Arbor, we could live in a house, in a great public school system, just a short, safe walk from downtown.

Starting law school was a little bit of a leap of faith. I really had no idea what it was going to be like. But—thank goodness!—the subject matter was immediately both more fascinating and more accessible than I anticipated. One of the things I found that I liked best was engaging with professors outside of class, and bouncing my take on things off them. They were always receptive and willing to talk. I hadn’t been anywhere before where I had the opportunity to talk about ideas at that level. Probably the best thing about law school for me personally was that it helped me to come into my own as an intellectual. That means the world to me.

As I approached graduation, my priority was to balance moving forward with my career and stability for my daughter. I had an offer from the firm in Los Angeles that I had worked for during my 2L summer, but I wanted to stay in Ann Arbor until my daughter graduated from high school. With the help of Career Planning and recommendations from those same professors I used to talk with after class, I managed to secure two federal clerkships in Detroit—one in district court, and one on the court of appeals—that will take my daughter and me through her senior year. It is the perfect solution: Clerking has been an invaluable experience, and the law firm is holding my job for me until I am done. At Michigan Law, I’ve been able to find ways to make choices that were good for my career and my family at the same time. That’s no small feat!

An extraordinary range of opportunity awaits you, first as a Michigan Law student and then as a graduate. Whether your interests lead you into private practice, public interest work, government, a judicial clerkship, academia, or some career path that’s yours alone, we stand ready to help you explore and refine your goals. We’ll provide counsel on career changes within and beyond the law, help you network with alumni in similar areas of practice or in places you’d like to be, and help you access our array of career databases and directories. In our Office of Career Planning, our attorney-counselors are available for individualized discussions, ready to offer advice and guidance as you pursue a career that’s fulfilling—both personally and professionally—throughout your professional lifetime.

In short, access to our deep well of career resources and counseling doesn’t end when you receive your JD—it’s just beginning.

Learn more
www.law.umich.edu/careers

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Opportunity awaits you.
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