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**ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN
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CHANGE IN ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS TO STATE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

BY HENRY M. BATES, DEAN OF THE LAW SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY
OF MICHIGAN

A VERY important step forward in legal education was taken on January 25th, 1924, when the Regents of the University of Michigan adopted the unanimous recommendation of the law faculty for the raising of entrance requirements to the Law School, as follows:

“Beginning with the fall of 1926, the satisfactory completion of three years of college work in an approved college or university in addition to an academic or high school course of four years will be required of all students as a pre-requisite to admission to the Law School as candidates for degrees.

“Beginning with the fall of 1928 the following persons only will be admitted to the Law School as candidates for degrees:

“First, persons who have graduated from an approved college or university with the degree of Bachelor of Arts or its equivalent.

“Second, students who have been admitted to the combined curriculum in Letters and Law at the University of Michigan, or to the similar combined curriculum of any approved university or college which makes provision for such a curriculum, provided it is administered on substantially the same plan and with the same restrictions as that of the University of Michigan.”

This step had been under consideration for at least four years and was taken for the following reasons:

First (and most important), The law faculty and the University authorities were convinced, from careful study of the ability and scholarship displayed by students, classed with reference to the amount of their general or prelegal education, that success in mastering legal principle, in understanding law cases and in formulating legal reasoning, bore a direct relationship to the amount of general mental training of the several classes of students. This was observable in the class room, in discussions of legal principle, and it was shown by carefully collected and collated statistics showing the scholarship records upon final examinations. Moreover, it coincides

with the experience and opinion in every good law school in the country.

In the second place, the American Bar Association, at its annual meeting in Cincinnati in 1921, by an overwhelming vote, adopted a resolution recommending that no student be admitted to the bar unless he had completed at least two years of college work. It was felt that Michigan, as one of the oldest and one of the most progressive of state institutions, could not afford to rest content with the minimum which the American Bar Association felt desirable. Since the American Bar Association meeting a national convention of delegates from state and local bar associations has approved of these recommendations of the American Bar Association; and the Michigan Bar Association, and many others, in annual meetings have likewise coincided with the judgments thus expressed.

In the third place, the growing effectiveness of this School as a training for the bar, and the magnificent new equipment and opportunities made available by a generous graduate of the School, have begun greatly to accelerate the growth of the Law School; and it has been apparent for two or three years that some kind of selective basis must be adopted if the School were not to grow to unmanageable size in the near future. It is, of course, a mere matter of common sense that a selection on the basis of general education and the ability displayed in obtaining it will produce far better results than any arbitrary limitation.

Modern legal business is so intricate and complicated; it runs so frequently into affairs of all kinds and demands learning in so many fields, the volume of law has grown so enormous and competition among lawyers themselves has grown so keen, that better training is required for the lawyers of the future than for the generation now in the saddle in practice, in law schools, and upon governing boards of universities. It was felt that we must not make the mistake of thinking that what was adequate and well-adapted for our needs and our generation will be adapted for the generations of the future. A college education now is within the reach of every really able and industrious boy or girl who is looking forward to going into one of the older professions. The requirement imposes no hardship but merely insures that the graduates of the Michigan Law School of the future shall be prepared to hold their own and to assume places of leadership at the bar.

Harvard, Yale, Pennsylvania, Columbia, and perhaps two or three other institutions, require the completion of a college course prerequisite to admission to the law schools. Several other schools already require three years of college work for admission. It seems to the writer an absurd fallacy and most undemocratic notion, and a complete subversion of reasoning, to assert that a state institution cannot do, and shall not do, as well for its students as the privately endowed institutions do. The State of Michigan, so far as financial resources are concerned, is far more able to provide the highest type of education for its students than the richest endowed institution in the world. It is a denial of common sense, an expression of lack of confidence in the people and their institutions, to assert that we must leave the highest in quality to universities endowed by wealthy individuals, and do only mediocre or poor work in those educational institutions maintained by the people. The action of the Michigan authorities shows that no such belief obtains at the University of Michigan.