

# PRE-LAW AT UVM

## PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

### General Information

Our goals with these documents are to prepare you for (1) deciding whether you want to pursue a career in law, and (2) if so, preparing you to prepare for that career. There is a lot for you to think about here, and our intention is to provide you with some of the tools that will help you make these decisions. Of course, there is no single approach or strategy to take. Rather, we are helping you determine what questions to think about, and how to approach your undergraduate experience if you intend to apply to law school.

A pre-law curriculum is a comprehensive undergraduate plan of study that you design to maximize your chances of obtaining admission to a law school when you are a senior. Contrary to what you may have heard, there is no specified or required pre-law curriculum. Law school admissions committees require only that you have an undergraduate degree in any major; they do not favor applicants with certain majors. Nevertheless, there are recommended courses which should help prepare you for admission, aid you in law school courses, and give you success as a practicing attorney. Whatever major you choose, and whatever other courses you take, **you must achieve an outstanding undergraduate academic record**. In addition, you are responsible for doing all the necessary preparation in order to make yourself an attractive law school applicant. Remember that law school admissions are competitive, and that you will be competing against other applicants who have impressive records as well.

Before you determine which courses to take, stop and ask yourself about your commitment to the law. You are not only thinking about law school, but a lifetime commitment to a profession that is very demanding. As a law student you will devote three years of hard work to courses. Many law schools warn those who apply that they should expect to spend at least ten hours a day, at least six days a week, on their course work. Indeed, outside employment is specifically limited in your initial year. After earning your J.D. (Doctor of Jurisprudence) degree, you will probably have to study intensively for several months to pass state bar exams to become a licensed attorney. Once you join a law firm, you may be expected to put in long days (and often long nights) at the office. Some students feel compelled after graduation to take positions they might not like in order to address their educational debts. It is not the glamorous life you see lawyers enjoying on your favorite TV shows. These realities should not frighten or discourage you, but you should understand the sustained effort demanded of you now and in the future. Are you prepared to see the challenge ahead as an opportunity? Do you see the rewards of the future career as worth the energy you will have to expend? If you can answer “yes” to these questions, you have the commitment. Whatever you do, don’t sign on simply in response to pressures from others. They won’t have to pay the price of the commitment – you will.