

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAW SCHOOL

Students thinking of law study soon discover that the programs of most law schools have a great deal in common. The choice of one school over another is not easily made on the basis of catalog descriptions of the teaching methods, course offerings, and formal requirements. The similarity is natural, since most American law schools share the aim of educating lawyers for careers that may take many paths and that will not be limited to any particular state or region. Although many lawyers eventually find themselves practicing within some special branch of the law, American legal education is still fundamentally an education for generalists. It emphasizes the acquisition of broad and basic knowledge of law, an understanding of the functioning of the legal system, and, perhaps even more important, the development of analytical abilities of a high order. This common emphasis reflects the conviction that such an education is the best kind of preparation for the diverse roles that law school graduates occupy in American life and for the changing nature of the problems any individual lawyer is likely to encounter over a long career.

Within this tradition, which it shares, the University of Chicago Law School has been influenced by a special interest, imparted at its inception, in the relationships between law and other social studies and in the interaction of law with its social and human context. Important themes in the School's history and outlook can be suggested by a word about the beginnings of the University and of the Law School.

The University of Chicago, one of the youngest of the major American universities, was founded in 1890. The generosity of its founding donors, led by John D. Rockefeller, enabled the first President of the University, William Rainey Harper, to realize his bold ideas and extraordinary standards in the creation of a new university. Although the initial steps had come from the interest of the Baptist denomination in establishing a strong college in the Middle West, Harper insisted that the new institution must be a true university, with a strong emphasis on advanced training and research as well as undergraduate instruction. The University was launched with a program of ambitious dimensions and with a faculty of remarkable distinction. It became at once one of the leading universities of the world, "a new kind of institution, borrowing from the structure and aims of German and English universities, joining the gentlemanly tradition of zeal for good works of the New England colleges with the confidence and brashness of the Middle West." The character of the University from the start was stamped by a spirit of innovation, devotion to intellectual inquiry, and a strong sense of mission. As one study of American higher education has said, "No episode was

more important in shaping the outlook and expectations of American higher education during those years than the founding of the University of Chicago, one of those events in American history that brought into focus the spirit of an age.”

The Law School, part of Harper’s original plan but delayed in its fulfillment until 1902, was a product of the same innovative spirit and concern for the common aims of a university. The objective, in the view of Harper and faculty members associated with him in the project, was to create a new kind of law school, professional in its purpose but with a broader outlook than was then prevalent in the leading American law schools. It was to be more than a training institution for admission to the bar, a view that prevailed despite the strong skepticism of, among others, Dean Ames of the Harvard Law School, who eventually assisted President Harper by lending Professor Joseph Beale to serve as Dean during the organizing period. The aspirations of the new school were set by Harper’s conception of legal education in a university setting: Education in law “implies a scientific knowledge of law and of legal and juristic methods. These are the crystallization of ages of human progress. They cannot be understood in their entirety without a clear comprehension of the historic forces of which they are the product, and of the social environment with which they are in living contact. A scientific study of law involves the related sciences of history, economics, philosophy—the whole field of man as a social being.” The effects of this philosophy were seen in a number of developments in which the School had a leading role during its first half-century, including the growth of administrative law, legislation, and comparative law as recognized fields of law school study, the introduction of economics and accounting into the curriculum, the extension of the field of legal research from concern with the rules of law to empirically oriented investigations of the legal system, and the appointment of regular faculty members from disciplines outside the law. In addition, the Law School from the beginning established close relationships with the faculties in other departments of the University, a number of whom each year participate in the teaching of courses and seminars in the Law School.

The present program of the School seeks to combine a rigorous professional emphasis with the search for knowledge about law viewed as a social science. The School has long been noted for work in the field of law and economics, and it now is especially rich also in resources for the study of legal history. Other special emphases in recent years have brought the development of a leading Center for Studies in Criminal Justice and an extensive program of courses, seminars, and research on urban problems, in conjunction with the University’s Center for Urban Studies, whose director is a member

of the Law School faculty. The strong orientation of the faculty toward research provides students with unusually good opportunities for independent research and writing and for employment during term time and summers as research assistants to members of the faculty. The School is the home of three faculty-edited journals—*The Supreme Court Review*, *The Journal of Law and Economics*, and *The Journal of Legal Studies*—as well as a monographic series, *Studies in Legal History*, published by the Harvard University Press in association with the American Society for Legal History. The School also has close ties with the American Bar Foundation, a research institution affiliated with the American Bar Association, which conducts a broad program of research in law and its processes. The Foundation, located next door to the Law School, also employs students as research assistants.

The program for the professional degree (the J.D. degree) begins with a common program for all students in the first year, covering the basic common-law fields and emphasizing training in legal reasoning, legal research techniques, and exercises in writing various forms of legal documents, as well as an introduction to the arts of appellate advocacy. For most of the first-year work, courses are conducted for the entire class of about 160 in order to provide a unified experience in the foundation subjects. In one course, however, the class is divided into small sections. Students also meet in small sections for legal-writing work under the supervision of the Bigelow Teaching Fellows, an important feature of the School's first-year program. The first-year program also includes an elective course in the Spring Quarter to give a different perspective on the law in anticipation of the second- and third-year work.

The work of the upperclass years is entirely elective and permits a fair degree of flexibility to the individual student in planning his program. The expectation is that all students will take work that gives them a strong foundation in the major subject areas, but with an opportunity to cultivate some special interests and to take advantage of the generous scope provided, in seminars and in independent study, for substantial research and writing. A number of courses and seminars, considered especially appropriate for the third year, stress the solution of complex problems or transactions in the form in which they come to the lawyer in practice, drawing upon the theoretical knowledge previously acquired and calling for the application of that knowledge to real situations. Acquaintance with the techniques of litigation is stressed, through Trial Practice courses in which students carry out the steps in the preparation and trial of a lawsuit under the supervision of trial practitioners and judges drawn from the local courts. The program of the second and third years may also include a certain amount of course work in other departments and schools of the University.

A large proportion of the students engage in at least one intensive extracurricular activity that forms an important part of the educational experience. The School's Mandel Legal Aid Clinic provides exceptional opportunity for in-school experience in a particular kind of law office. The Clinic is one of the major legal-service offices in Chicago. Staffed by six full-time attorneys who supervise the work of students, it permits about seventy students each year (thirty-five each from the second and third years) to have direct responsibility for the problems of actual clients, including participation in litigation. The Clinic's offices are in the Law School building. The recent opening of an affiliated office in the neighborhood, specializing in legal representation and social services for indigent criminal defendants and their families, offers opportunity for supervised clinical experience for an additional forty students. There is an active moot-court program and competition, providing intensive training in the writing of briefs and practice in oral argument before appellate benches. *The University of Chicago Law Review*, one of the leading student-run legal periodicals, selects its membership partly on the basis of an open competition in which a large number of students participate during the summer between the first and second years; approximately 20 percent of the student body are on the *Review*, which has maintained a strong tradition of excellence and volume in its output of student work.

The School places a special value on ease of access to the faculty and informal exchange with the faculty as part of the educational process. The building is designed to encourage this atmosphere. Faculty offices are arranged around the working floors of the Law Library, which are used by both students and faculty. The custom is for students to drop in on faculty members at any time and without going through secretaries or other staff. A large lounge, in which students and faculty gather between classes and for coffee breaks, occupies a central place on the main floor of the Law School.

The School is housed in a set of buildings of noted architectural distinction, designed by the late Eero Saarinen and completed in 1960. They include an unusual courtroom complex, the Weymouth Kirkland Courtroom, in which actual sittings of the Supreme Court of Illinois and other courts and agencies are held each year. There is an auditorium with capacity for the entire student body, which is frequently used for lectures, motion pictures, concerts, and similar University functions. The Law Library, which contains over 300,000 volumes, is one of the leading law libraries in the Nation, especially strong as a research library and in its collection of foreign legal materials. A large proportion of its seating is in the form of carrels and semicarrels spaced throughout the five floors rather than concentrated in a large reading room. The Law School complex, known as the Laird Bell Quadrangle, is completed by a residence hall, the

Burton-Judson Courts, in which a large number of the first-year students and some upperclassmen reside and which is directly connected with the academic buildings.

The student body of the School has always been drawn from many colleges and parts of the United States. The alumni, numbering about 4,500, are widely dispersed throughout the country, with strong concentrations in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, and San Francisco as well as in Chicago. An active alumni program and a well-established Placement Office help assure students a broad range of employment opportunities upon graduation and during the summers between academic years.