

The University of South Dakota School of Law

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■ Introduction

The School of Law, located on the university campus in Vermillion, is noted for its contributions in training distinguished leaders for the bench, the bar, and the lawmaking bodies of the state and region. Founded in 1901, the school is accredited by the ABA and is an AALS member. The city of Vermillion, with a population of approximately 10,000, provides a small-town atmosphere for students, faculty, and staff.

■ Library and Physical Facilities

The three-story McKusick Law Library is equipped to meet the research needs of students, faculty, and members of the bar. Students, staff, and faculty have access to the law school facility 7 days a week, 24 hours a day through swipe-card access. It is South Dakota's largest and most complete law library, providing essential research services to the courts, legislature, government agencies, lawyers, private citizens, and students conducting interdisciplinary research. The book and microform collections include court reports, statutes, and other legal authorities.

The School of Law building, completed in 1981, has received national recognition for its design. The law school's balconied courtroom, situated in the middle of the building, is the architectural focal point. The courtroom is fully equipped with state-of-the-art videoconferencing technologies and has an adjoining audiovisual control room and judges' chambers. The building also contains two large classrooms, two smaller classrooms, a seminar room, a computer laboratory, a student lounge and locker area, and suites of offices for faculty, administration, and student organizations. The law school building is equipped for wireless network connectivity. The student organization suites contain study carrels for member use. The law library has 227 study seats, including 166 carrels assigned to members of the student body.

■ Curriculum

Ninety semester credits are required for the JD degree. The first-year curriculum is required of all students. In the second and third years, electives are available in addition to required courses. During the summer, an externship program is offered for six credit hours. Externs learn by doing under the close supervision of an attorney and the externship director. Skills training is also available to second- and third-year students in the trial techniques course, negotiations, and other courses, each of which utilizes to the fullest extent the technological capabilities of the law school.

■ Special Programs

- Joint-degree Programs—There are nine programs with other graduate departments, with master's degrees available in professional accountancy, business administration, history, English, psychology, education administration, political science, public administration, and administrative studies. Students may transfer nine hours of approved interdisciplinary coursework for JD credit and must

complete both programs in three years to receive maximum credit.

- Interdisciplinary Study—For upper-division students not in a joint-degree program, up to six graduate credits in other university divisions may be taken and applied toward the hours required for the JD degree. This allows a law student to broaden his or her education by the pursuit of new disciplines.
- Curricular Emphases—Two areas of emphasis are identified. Instruction in these areas is informally structured and encompasses curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular opportunities for enhancement. Emphasis is offered in environmental and natural resources law, as well as Indian law.
- Flex-time Program—This program permits certain well-qualified students to take less than the normal load of credits each semester and obtain a JD in five years instead of three. The program admits a limited number of students who could not attend law school on a full-time basis. The law school does not offer evening or weekend courses.
- Accelerated Admission—An applicant may apply for accelerated admission, and be admitted to and enroll in law school without final completion of the requirements for the applicant's undergraduate degree. The undergraduate degree must be attained by the applicant prior to graduation from law school.
- Law Honors Scholars Program—High school seniors who are accepted as USD undergraduate Honors Scholars may apply for and receive provisional (automatic) admission to the law school upon successful completion of their undergraduate degree in four years with a 3.5 GPA, fulfillment of Honors Program requirements, and completion of the LSAT for statistical purposes only.
- Law Screening Program—Applicants who are not regularly admitted may be invited to participate in the Law Screening Program. The summer program consists of two courses, agency and personal property, offered in five weeks of lectures and finals during the sixth week. Participants are admitted or denied admission on the basis of their performance on final exams, which are graded anonymously.
- The USD School of Law and Vermont Law School offer a dual degree in environmental law. Students earn a JD from USD and a Master of Science in Environmental Law (MSEL) from Vermont Law School.

■ Student Activities

The *South Dakota Law Review* publishes articles by legal scholars, lawyers, jurists, and students three times a year. The *Great Plains Natural Resources Journal* publishes articles on environmental law and natural resources law topics. Other cocurricular activities include a Moot Court Board, Client Counseling and Negotiations Board, and Trial Advocacy teams. Boards successfully compete at the intramural, regional, and national levels. The school is active in the Law Student Division of the ABA. Other organizations include Women in Law, Native American Law Students Association, Black Law Students Association, Christian Legal Society, Environmental Law Society, International Law Students Association, Law

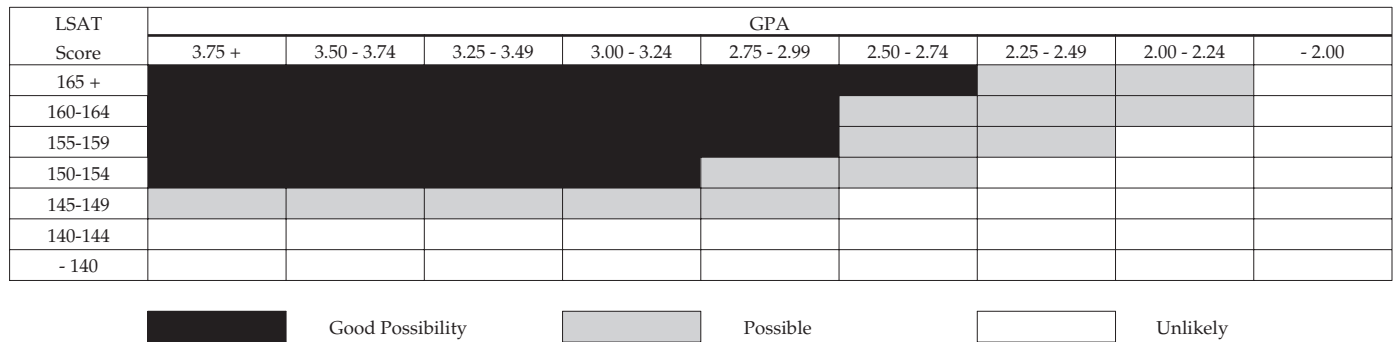
School Democrats, Federalist Society, American Constitution Society, Delta Theta Phi, Phi Alpha Delta, Phi Delta Phi, R.D. Hurd Pro Bono Society (pro bono legal work under the supervision of legal services attorneys in surrounding communities and reservations), regular participation in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, and the South Dakota Innocence Project. Each spring, USD School of Law hosts the three-day March term of the Supreme Court of South Dakota, which provides an extraordinary opportunity for law and undergraduate students, faculty, and the public to observe oral arguments before the state's highest appeals court.

■ Career Services

The placement opportunities for third-year law students are excellent in South Dakota, the surrounding areas, and throughout the United States. Approximately 27 percent of the graduates are placed in judicial clerkships, and one-third are employed outside South Dakota. The law school has an active program to place first- and second-year students in summer internship programs with law firms.

Applicant Profile

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USD School of Law considers many factors beyond LSAT score and GPA. This chart should be used only as a general rule.

For fall 2005:	Applicants:	528	Stats for the 167 regular admits:		LSAT	GPA
	Completed applications:	519				
	Regularly admitted:	167				
	Accepted from Summer Screening or PLSI:	14		75th:	157	3.74
	Total accepted:	181		Median:	154	3.41
	Matriculated full-time:	90		25th:	152	3.10