

'Conscious effort for excellence' pays off for law school

By Gayle Forman
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Lawyers aren't just white men anymore and neither are law students. This year, the University's first-year law class comprises 55 percent women and 16 percent minority students, which is a 3 percent hike from last year. All of this year's first-year students tout high GPAs as well as higher LSAT scores.

So why are law school hopefuls applying to the University, and why are these intelligent and diverse future jurists choosing the University's law school over very prestigious schools such as Harvard?

Katherine Jernberg, the law school's director of admissions, feels that the school's appeal is its "conscious effort for excellence, gender equity and diversity."

The law school is an excellent school and its reputation and ranking is catching up with the public, Jernberg said.

Rebecca Breitbard, a 23-year-old first-year law student felt attracted to the school because its commitment to academic excellence. Breitbard said the school seemed to have a sense of just what kind of student they wanted, and made a strong effort at getting that kind of student.

"I feel like I was downright pursued by the admissions office," said Breitbard, who turned down admission at Hastings University Law School to come to Oregon.



Michael Davis, a first year law student, picks up his packet during law school orientation Thursday.

Breitbard also felt that the University's law school would be less stressful than other schools and because of the non-competitive atmosphere.

Jernberg agrees that the school has a more nurturing attitude toward its students. This nurturing begins in the admissions

process, Jernberg said, and continues throughout their studies. Jernberg credits the "fantastic advising system" with helping students to succeed.

"There is a sense of congeniality and a concerted effort to help people out" Jernberg said of the law school's faculty. Con-

sequently, the law school has an impressive rate of retention for first-year students. Of last year's 149 entering students, only six did not make it through the year.

Jernberg understands why students might prefer to study law in a less dog-eat-dog environment. Law school need not

mean hell.

"A bunch of ambitious and bright people does not preclude humanity" she said.

Chico Warren, a 25-year-old first-year student decided to go to law school to augment his bachelor's degree in journalism. Warren, who is African-American and a native Oregonian, earned his undergraduate degree from Howard University in Washington D.C. Warren chose Howard because it is a predominantly black school.

"I always wanted to go to a black college," he said.

But Warren decided to come back home to get his law degree.

"I always wanted to finish up my academic career in Oregon," he said. It seemed like a preferred place to settle down. I thought my home state would be more attractive."

Warren feels that the rise in minority students is important.

"They have to make institutions of learning more like populations in general," he said.

Breitbard was also pleased by the increase in women and minorities in the student body. "I think it's great," she said. "I also expect it."

Both she and Warren did notice that the campus and Eugene in general is, relatively speaking, fairly white.

"I found it disconcerting that it's so white," Breitbard said. "I'm glad there are more minority students (at the law school). I appreciate diversity."

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