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Book Review - How to Get into Law School

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BOOK REVIEW

HOW TO GET INTO LAW SCHOOL. By Rennard Strickland. New York: Hawthorne. 1974. Pp. 194. Hard cover \$8.95, soft cover \$4.95.

Professor Strickland, a member of the Faculty Admissions Committee at the University of Tulsa College of Law, describes himself as a fish sampling the bait being offered by law school applicants. Having seen a large number of various types of bait, and being familiar with the tastes of selection committee fish at other law schools throughout the country, he is in a position to advise the prospective law student how to have his application bait prepared so that it will be snapped up by at least one of these fish.

However, any notion that the impossible can be performed is quickly dispelled. A person who is not qualified for entrance to law school will remain unqualified. The "D" student will not learn any magic tricks which will enable him to be admitted to Harvard (or anywhere else for that matter).

The book is written to aid the qualified student in gaining admittance to a worthwhile law school. And, as is pointed out throughout the book, merely being qualified is not an assurance of being admitted. Many well-qualified students are never admitted to law school; many less qualified persons are admitted. The horror stories are all included—the student who spent a thousand dollars on applications and was turned down by forty-two law schools, the student placed on sixty-three waiting lists, the ratio of admissions to applicants at most law schools shrinking to the astounding proportion of one in ten. The enrollment statistics quoted throw cold water on the idea that being qualified will assure admission.

Yet, for thousands upon thousands of qualified students seeking admission, this cold water treatment is necessary. For the one theme which is emphasized throughout the book is that the aspiring law student must constantly evaluate himself in the face of these hard facts of real life and then react accordingly in his application procedures. This evaluation of oneself is necessary at the undergraduate level in choosing a prelaw program; at the application level in deciding which

law schools to apply to; and even after acceptance in choosing which law school to attend, or after rejection in deciding whether to attend an unaccredited law school. Professor Strickland discusses each of these steps along the road from entering college to enrolling in law school. In doing so he gives an insight into those factors in each step which are considered important by admissions committees.

Of course the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score and the undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) are initially the most important factors. If the applicant has already completed undergraduate work and taken the LSAT, his most important job is to evaluate his results and determine which schools would be most likely to accept him and which schools would be most acceptable to him. Professor Strickland shows the applicant how to evaluate his own statistical data and match it with the various law school profiles so that he can apply to the schools where he will most likely be accepted and where the majority of the student body will be on a competitive level equal to his own.

It would be a mistake, though, to wait until after the completion of undergraduate work and the taking of the LSAT before making use of Professor Strickland's book. I would suggest that the book first be read in the freshman year of college if the student has any thoughts at all about the possibility of attending law school. As Professor Strickland explains, it is during these four years when the applicant is really preparing for law school admission. In discussing "What is a Good Pre-law Program?" he points out the types of courses which a student should take to learn to think like a lawyer. The dangers to be avoided in undergraduate school are also examined—taking non-substantive courses which will produce a higher UGPA; taking undergraduate "law" courses to get a headstart on other applicants; attending an undergraduate school which is itself of lower quality, or which grades solely on a pass-fail basis. These are all explained in terms of how they affect the applicant's admission chances.

The rest of the book discusses the other factors looked at by an admissions committee. The preparation for and taking of the LSAT; the filling out of applications, reports, and letters of recommendation; even attempts at bribery and intimidation of admission officials are all discussed. Much of the material is gleaned from discussions with members of admission committees of various law schools or from the catalogues of the law schools. In this way, the applicant can see a cross-

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section of views of the various law schools and determine what factors are common to them.

For the applicant who is not qualified for law school this book will be discouraging. For the applicant who is qualified, or who is capable of becoming qualified, the book is a necessity. It will force the qualified applicant to realistically evaluate his undergraduate work and application procedure. Hopefully, the end result will be that he will be able to snag one of those fish.

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