

1975

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Recommended Citation

William A. Gregory, & Georgina B. Landman, *The Admissions Process at the University of Tulsa College of Law: An Update*, 10 Tulsa L. J. 571 (2013).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.utulsa.edu/tlr/vol10/iss4/5>

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THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA COLLEGE OF LAW: AN UPDATE

William A. Gregory* and Georgina B. Landman**

The purpose of this article is to inform our readers of the nature of the admissions process, and to update the information contained in Professor Schmidt's perceptive and informative article appearing at page 111 in this volume of the *Tulsa Law Journal*.

In mid April, 1975, the University of Tulsa College of Law received the results of a validity study conducted by the Educational Testing Service. That study showed some interesting results. First, it confirmed the general feeling of the Admissions Committee that undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) and Law School Admissions Test score (LSAT) are good predictors of law school performance, especially when both predictors are used and exclusive weight is not placed on one or the other.¹ Second, it showed that Tulsa is similar to most other law schools in that similar coefficients of correlation were obtained. Two other predictive factors are the writing ability score (WA) and LSAT college mean (LCM). The writing ability test consists of a series of multiple choice questions, and is given on the same day as the LSAT which is a longer examination. The writing ability test is scored on a 20 to 80 point scale; whereas the LSAT is scored on a 200 to 800 point scale.

The LCM is the average LSAT score of the students at a given institution. The average score of all students who took the LSAT in the academic year 1974-75 was 523. Thus, an LCM of 600 for a given school would suggest that that institution produces undergraduates with

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1. See Cooper, *The Law School Admissions Predictors*, 14 TULSA LAWYER 33 (1974) for a thorough and eminently readable discussion of these factors.

a greater aptitude for law study than average; by the same token, an LCM of 450 would suggest the opposite.

The admissions crisis continues at the College of Law. In 1974, 912 applicants applied for admission, and 187 places in the class existed; thus many difficult choices had to be made by the faculty Admissions Committee. The admissions process remains much the same at Tulsa as in former years. Primary responsibility rests with the Admissions Committee and each file is reviewed by at least two professors before a final decision is made. Especially difficult decisions are made by the entire Committee, and a given file may be discussed and voted on by as many as seven professors. While most admissions decisions rely heavily on UGPA and LSAT, careful consideration is always given to nonquantifiable factors by the Committee.

The recent validity study will be discussed at length because it confirms the Committee's policy of giving heavy weight to UGPA and LSAT. What is a validity study? It is an attempt to compare two sets of statistics, and to describe the relationship between them. In our case, one set of statistics is UGPA, LSAT, WA and LCM and the other set is actual first year grade average at the College of Law. The above described data was provided to Educational Testing Service (ETS), and after some quite complex mathematical calculations, including regression analysis, the results were sent to the College of Law.

Table I indicates the coefficients of correlation obtained with various predictive factors. The conclusions to be drawn from it are as follows. First, if the Admissions Committee had to rely on any one factor, UGPA would obtain the best results. Note especially the relatively lower correlation obtained with LSAT alone. Second, the best predictions can be made by relying on more than one factor. Third, the writing ability test which is administered along with the LSAT but reported as a separate score, does not predict very well.

Table II was developed by ETS and indicates the appropriate weights to be given to the various predictive factors for maximum predictive efficiency. Note that all of the predictive formulas result in the WA having a negative correlation. That means that those students who score high on this test do poorly at Tulsa, and that those students who score low on the test do well at Tulsa. The consequence for the Admissions Committee is that we will in the future attach no weight to the WA.

The earlier descriptions of UGPA, LSAT, WA, and LCM help to

explain the importance of LCM. Since the LCM is the average score on the LSAT obtained by those students at a given institution, to include it in an admissions index is in effect to give preference to those students who have attended good schools, and to lower the chances for admission for those students who have attended schools that are not so good. The LCM is in effect a way to weight more heavily the UGPA of the applicant from Harvard than the applicant from Podunk.

Of the four equations indicated in Table II, note that the Admissions Committee will use the last one, i.e., the three-predictor equation that includes UGPA, LSAT, and LCM. This choice was made because this particular equation has the highest coefficient of correlation that does not include any factor with a negative correlation. Note that the four-predictor formula which includes WA has a higher coefficient of correlation, but it is unsatisfactory because of the negative correlation with the WA test score.

The three-predictor equation given in Table II, i.e.,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Predicted FYA} = & 0.3338(\text{GPA}) + 0.0014(\text{LSAT}) \\ & + 0.0037(\text{LCM}) - 0.9278 \end{aligned}$$

will be used by the Admissions Committee to compute a predicted first-year grade point average (FYA). For example, in the case of an applicant with a UGPA of 2.85, an LSAT of 585, and an LCM of 541, his (or her) predicted FYA would be 2.94. This predicted FYA is sometimes called an admissions index. It is one factor which is calculated by ETS for the use of law school Admissions Committees. It will appear in the file of every applicant to Tulsa, and the Admissions Committee will give it heavy weight. Obviously, prior to the required use of the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), reliance on an admissions index would not have been possible for Tulsa because of the heavy administrative costs involved in its calculation. Now Tulsa can (as it has been doing for the second year) make its admissions decisions with as much data as would be available to any law school in the country. The availability of this data does not mean that admissions decisions are made by computer. It means that law faculty now are able to concentrate their time on difficult borderline admissions decisions rather than wasting it on mechanical chores. Now that we have full confidence in our admissions index (a result of the validity study) it will be possible for the Admissions Committee routinely to accept applicants with a predicted FYA above a fixed point and routinely to deny applicants with a predicted FYA below a fixed point (though not

until at least two members of the Committee have read the file) and to concentrate Committee decisions on the middle group.

It is hoped that this article helps to remove some of the mystery from the admissions process. It is a process which operates best in the open, with full understanding by the public, the bar, and the applicants of exactly what procedures and methods are being used. It is also important that the procedures used be constantly tested and re-examined; that was the justification for our validity study, and the results have fulfilled our expectations.

TABLE I

CORRELATIONS OF VARIOUS PREDICTORS WITH FIRST-YEAR AVERAGE GRADES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA COLLEGE OF LAW

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Coefficients of Correlation*</i>
UGPA Alone	.30
LSAT Alone	.16
WA Alone	.03
LCM Alone**	.19
Admissions Index Alone***	.29
UGPA and LSAT Combined	.36
UGPA, LSAT, and WA Combined	.36
UGPA, LSAT, WA, and LCM Combined	.43
UGPA, LSAT, and LCM Combined	.41
Number of Students	156

* Perfect correlation of one set of data with another would yield a coefficient of 1.00. No correlation at all would yield a coefficient of 0.00. Many similar validity studies have produced correlations of the range of .30 to .45.

** LCM (LSAT College Mean) results from assigning to each student the mean score for all candidates from his or her undergraduate college, as currently used in the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). If a student's undergraduate college code is not available or if his college did not have enough LSAT candidates for a mean, the mean LSAT score for all candidates from all undergraduate colleges (523) was used.

*** The Admissions Index used in this study was based on the following formula:

$$\text{Index} = 200(\text{GPA}) + \text{LSAT} + 10(\text{WA}) + \text{LCM}$$

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF PREDICTIVE FORMULAS

Two Predictors (UGPA and LSAT)

Multiple Correlation Coefficient	.30
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Standard Error of Estimate .44

Regression Equation

$$\text{Predicted FYA} = .2987(\text{UGPA}) + .0014(\text{LSAT}) \\ + 1.1181$$

Three Predictors (UGPA, LSAT, and WA)

Multiple Correlation Coefficient .33

Standard Error of Estimate .43

Regression Equation

$$\text{Predicted FYA} = .3027(\text{UGPA}) + .0019(\text{LSAT}) \\ - .0092(\text{WA}) + 1.2594$$

Four Predictors (UGPA, LSAT, WA, and LCM)

Multiple Correlation Coefficient .42

Standard Error of Estimate .42

Regression Equation

$$\text{Predicted FYA} = .3452(\text{UGPA}) + .0022(\text{LSAT}) \\ - .0123(\text{WA}) + .0044(\text{LCM}) - 1.1003$$

Three Predictors (UGPA, LSAT, and LCM)

Multiple Correlation Coefficient .37

Standard Error of Estimate .43

Regression Equation

$$\text{Predicted FYA} = .3338(\text{UGPA}) + .0014(\text{LSAT}) \\ + .0037(\text{LCM}) - .9278$$