



SPRING 2010

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WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR

Amy Urbanek
University of Utah

Welcome to the Spring 2010 Edition of the WAPLA Newsletter. I am excited to serve as the new editor, although somewhat daunted to be following Marty Sommer-ness after his many years of service. Marty is not gone, fortunately. In fact, you will find his review of

two law school related books in this issue.

In this issue you will also find Tim Garrison's farewell column, (farewell as President, he's also not going anywhere), Kris Tina Carlson's take on LSAC's new Evaluation Service, and some insights from Eileen Crane, a veteran Prelaw advisor who braved the rigors of law school

and lived to tell about it. Now back teaching and advising prelaw students, she discovered that her advice had changed after seeing "the other side." Finally, there is a column by yours truly in which I discuss some of the pitfalls our students may encounter in the electronic age where everything they write or post online is available forever.

As always, if you would like to contribute to future editions of this newsletter please let me know. I welcome submissions, and it is a fun and easy way to get published. The prelaw advisors in the WAPLA region possess such a depth of knowledge and experience. Please consider sharing yours. Contact me at aurbanek@uc.utah.edu to ask questions or submit an article.

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Tim Garrison
Portland State University

This is my last note to you as president of WAPLA, and I leave office with a considerable amount of pride about what we, as an organization, have been able to accomplish over the last three years.

I came into the presidency intending only to be a "caretaker" president. I had been impressed with the agenda set out by my outstanding predecessor, Frank Guliuzza, and I simply wanted to continue to follow his vision for the organization. I did not have in mind any bold initiatives or reforms. That being said, I am very pleased with the progress we made during my term.

First, I am leaving office with a treasury that is secure and will enable us to serve our membership in a broader fashion in the coming years.

Second, we have resolved some thorny structural and financial problems in the organization, and I hope I leave my successor with a clear and open field to forge ahead with her own agenda.

Third, we returned our caravan to Las Vegas last year, and this year we are expanding to a new site in Boise. As I leave office, we continue to consider cities where we might expand the caravan in the future.

Fourth, we brought on to our board energetic and intelligent board members such as Sara Lyness of Arizona State, Kris Tina Carlston of BYU, Rebecca Wood of UNLV, and Lori Hauseggar

of Boise State. They are already bringing a sense of revitalization to our board and dramatically improving our ability to deal with the impact of technology on prelaw advising.

Fifth, thanks to the expertise of Rebecca and Kris Tina, we have moved forward on two pressing technological issues: improving our website and moving our caravan to an electronic registration process. The former will enable us to do a better job of communicating with our membership, and the latter will make the caravan registration more accessible and user-friendly for our law school partners.

Sixth, we have continued to maintain a vibrant voice with PLANC, our national advising organization. I have been fortunate to have a designated member to

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE - CONTINUED

PLANC, Verlaine Walker, who has been willing to push important prelaw issues, such as a standardized policy for letters of recommendation, at the national level.

Seventh, we moved our newsletter, expertly edited for so long by Marty Sommers, to an electronic format. Amy Urbanek, who succeeded Marty during his convalescence, has been doing a wonderful job helping us with that transition. Let me note that we are particularly happy that Marty

will continue to provide us with his wisdom as an at-large member of the board. Although we have lost decades of prelaw advising experience with the retirement of Jim Riley, and the move of Frank Giuluzza to Virginia, we are so fortunate that we have executive board members with the intelligence and experience of Marty, Verlaine, and Doug Costain.

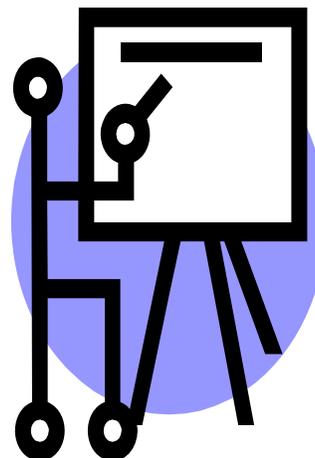
Eighth, after considerable discussion, we moved our regional conference from the fall to the late winter or early spring. We hope that this decision will improve attendance at our conference in the coming years. We staged a successful regional conference in this new time slot last February. The speakers at the conference, which focused on how social networking is affecting prelaw advising, really impressed on us how important it will be for advisors in the future to engage, rather than run from, the social network-

ing experience.

Finally, during my term we were able to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of WAPLA. I was very happy that we had the opportunity to honor the service of Jim Riley, who established our organization and who has served for years as our president and treasurer. We will miss Jim, as a board member, but he will continue to serve as a friend to the board.

While I am leaving office, this is not a sad moment for me. For one thing, I am not going anywhere, for I look forward to continuing with the executive board as treasurer and site supervisor of our Portland law school fair. I am pleased that I will continue to work with a group of dedicated, conscientious, and far-sighted prelaw advisors on the WAPLA board.

I also leave as president with the assurance that the organization will only con-



tinue to grow and improve in the future, thanks to WAPLA's wisdom in selecting Marilyn Hoffman as my successor. Marilyn will bring to the presidency a keen intelligence and considerable experience in advising. She has been advising prelaw students for a long time and has served on our board for several years. I can guarantee you that Marilyn will be a conscientious and successful president. The future of WAPLA will be very bright under her leadership.

2010 WAPLA LAW SCHOOL FAIR SCHEDULE

University of Colorado
Monday, October 18th

University of Utah
Tuesday, October 19th

Brigham Young University
Wednesday, October 20th

University of Arizona
Thursday, October 21st

Arizona State University
Friday, October 22nd

University of Nevada Las Vegas
Monday, October 26th

Portland State University
Thursday, November 15
(tentative)

Boise State University
Thursday, November 18th

REVIEWING LSAC'S NEW EVALUATION SERVICE

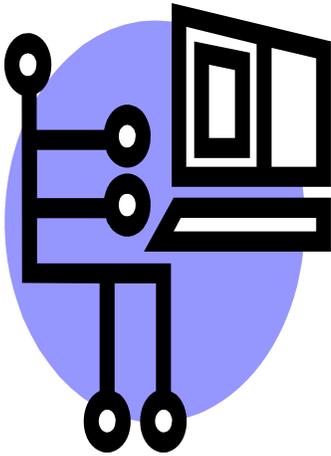
Kris Tina Carlson JD, MBA
Brigham Young University

While law school admissions committees can easily look at the quantitative aspects of an applicant's GPA and LSAT score, they often struggle to compare letters of recommendation. For example, an applicant may have a great letter of recommendation, not because the applicant is great, but because the letter writer has a

strong command of the English language. Or, an applicant may have a poor letter of recommendation simply because the letter writer discusses experiences that do not translate into qualities that an admissions committee is looking for to help them determine whether the applicant is a good fit for law school and the legal profession.

To aid in overcoming this dilemma LSAC has recently developed the Evaluation Service for the 2011 application cycle. The goal of the Evaluation Service is to provide structured, consistent, and valuable information about applicants to law schools. Evaluators are asked to rate specific non-cognitive factors to help law schools better evaluate an applicant.

LSAC'S NEW EVALUATION SERVICE - CONTINUED



The Evaluation Service includes ratings of 30 individual attributes and skills in six different categories, including:

- Intellectual skills
- Personal qualities
- Integrity and Honesty
- Communication
- Task Management
- Working with others

LSAC created these categories, along with the individual attribute questions, after researching these factors in relation to success in law school and the legal profession.

“For applicants, the Evaluation Service allows them to know what qualities law schools are looking for, and aids them when determining who they should ask to be their Evaluator.”

For each attribute, the Evaluator will be asked to rate whether the applicant is: “Below Average” (bottom 50%), “Average” (Top 50%), “Good” (Top 25%), “Very Good” (Top 10%), “Truly Exceptional” (Top 1-2%), or “Inadequate Opportunity to Judge”. The Evaluator has the opportunity to provide comments after completing each category and may provide general comments at the end of the Evaluation. In essence, the Evaluation Service allows law schools to receive specific information while still encouraging the Evaluator to provide information the Evaluator deems important.

There are many advantages to the Evaluation Service for both law schools and applicants. For law schools, the Evaluation Service makes comparison among applicants much easier. Additionally, this works well alongside the allowance for comments. For example, when an Evaluator states, “Stephanie shows great initiative,” admissions committees can empirically view how the Evaluator defines “great.” For applicants, the Evaluation Service allows them to know what qualities law schools are looking for, and aids them when determining who they should ask to be their Evaluator. Additionally, it provides the applicant with the opportunity to work on developing these skills prior to applying and attending law school.

Like letters of recommendation, however the Evaluation Service is not without flaws.

For example, law schools strongly encourage letter writers (and likely Evaluators) to be professors. The Evaluator/Professor may know the particular student well, but the Evaluator/Professor likely does not know every student they have ever taught just as well. Thus, it is difficult to determine exactly how accurate and helpful the comparisons are. Additionally, many of the categories are very specific. Is it realistic for an Evaluator/Professor to be aware of all these different attributes? In a letter of recommendation, if the letter writer has had an inadequate opportunity to judge a particular characteristic, the letter writer likely does not even address the topic. However, with the Evaluation Service if the Evaluator has had an inadequate opportunity to judge, it is still easy for the Evaluator/Professor to put down a mark that is complimentary of the candidate, although not necessarily known. Despite these flaws, however, the Evaluation Service is an improvement over the current letter of recommendation process.

As advisors we do not yet know how and which law schools will accept the new Evaluation as opposed to letters of recommendation. Because 2011 is the first year where the Evaluation Service will be available, it is likely that law schools will be flexible in their requirements. Some schools may only want letters of recommendation; others may want

a combination of letters and Evaluations, and others may encourage Evaluations over all else.

As we wait to learn what law schools prefer, we should focus our time on educating the 2011 applicants regarding the Evaluation, and help them understand the differences between an Evaluation and a letter of recommendation. Additionally, we should encourage the 2011 applicant to continue to work on developing relationships to ensure strong Evaluations and letters.

It is foreseeable; however, that as electronic recommendations become more and more the norm for professional schools, that we will see many schools transition to the Evaluation in the near future.



BOOK REVIEWS: GETTING INTO AND SUCCEEDING IN LAW SCHOOL

Martin D. Sommerness
Northern Arizona University

Three decades of pre-law advising have taught me many things. One of the foremost is there is a veritable plethora of books available for those considering law school. In fact, it seems that there once was a mere cottage industry around this subject, but then big business muscled its way into the scene with books, LSAT

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prep courses, and even corporate advisers.

In this industry setting, books for those considering law school generally fall into one, if not more, of three categories: the summary directory (of which the *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* is the most obvious example), the "insider's" book which purports to tell secrets not generally known about law school, and the "personal tale" book which tells the author's story (Scott Turow's *One L* is a superb example of this variety). Sometimes, a book may cross the boundaries, but that's for another review.

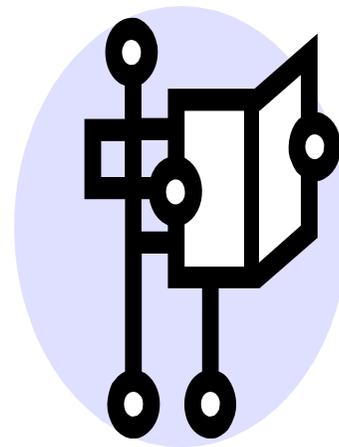
Two books that fall into the second category are *The Best Law Schools' Admissions Secrets: The Essential Guide from Harvard's Former Admissions Dean*, by Joyce Putnam Curll (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2008, 262 pages, \$17.95), and *How to Succeed in Law School*, 4th ed., by Gary A. Munneke (Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, 2008, 230 pages, \$12.99). Curll worked in law school admissions for some 34 years. Munneke, a law school graduate and a former law school administrator, also has, for more than 20 years, prepared the introductory section of another pre-law publication, *Barron's Guide to Law Schools*.

Although both of the books in question are about law

school, each has a decidedly different function. *The Best* is aimed at providing information about the admissions process. *How to* is far more concerned about the actual law school experience than it is about getting into law school.

The Best gives a fairly good overview of the admission process; however, as a long-time pre-law adviser and as an active APLA member, I am disappointed in the relatively small amount of attention (slightly more than two pages' worth) Curll devotes to pre-law advisers and APLAs. Where faculty pre-law advisers are concerned, she indicates "Some will do an outstanding job for you. . . Unfortunately," she indicates, such faculty advisers "are rare." She also discusses "the professional in the career services office", but does so in an almost contemptuously cursory manner. I have met and worked with far too many highly knowledgeable, energetic, unselfish, student-focused faculty and staff pre-law advisers in my own advising career to not observe Curll has done them a disservice in her treatment of them.

Another unfortunate aspect of Curll's text is the way she addresses law school rankings. After addressing the existence of the rankings, especially those in *U.S. News & World Report*, as well as the fact that some law schools do indeed "game" (my term) the system, she opines with almost

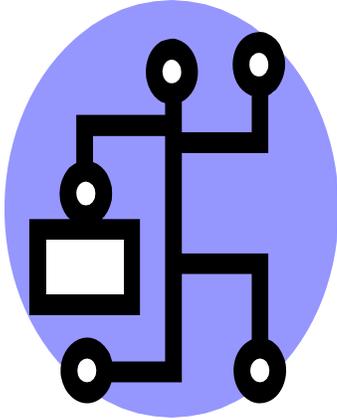


world-weariness "Rankings are here to stay. They are flawed, but they can be of some help to you. . . ." Slavery was once an institution too; that didn't make it acceptable.

If one does not have access to one of the too-many-to-name GREAT undergraduate pre-law advisers with whom I have worked, both faculty and staff, then one could find some value in Curll's book when considering applying to law school. The moral of the story here is for the pre-law student to get to a dedicated pre-law adviser. Failing that, this book could be of value. Additionally, if one suddenly find him/herself assigned to do pre-law advising and has absolutely no background on the subject, her text can serve as a good one-book crash course

How to deals only in a brief manner about the law school admissions process, and there basically with one's choice of a law school. The

BOOK REVIEWS - CONTINUED



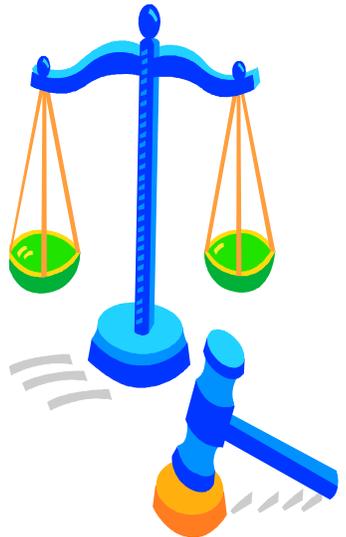
“the book is most helpful, especially if one is a new pre-law adviser without any knowledge of law school”

book is primarily about the actual law school experience, from the basic required courses, to law school culture, to managing stress, money and time, as well as law school technology (including electronic educational environments, legal research and computers). The text itself starts with a thought-provoking discussion by Munneke of “What Is Success?” and ends 156 pages later with an analysis of the same question. The book also includes some helpful appendices, including three sets of sample law school test questions.

Munneke gives lots of insight into studying the law, including the classroom ex-

perience as well as what happens outside of class. In addition to the sample law school questions in the appendices, he also provides helpful hints about exams, text anxiety and legal writing. *How to* is in its fourth edition—there’s a reason for that: the book is most helpful, especially if one is a new pre-law adviser without any knowledge of law school.

The highest praise I can give Munneke for his book is as follows: Occasionally, I teach an exploratory course about law and law school – if I were to do so again in the near future, I’d indeed include *How to Succeed in Law School* on the required reading list.



Martin D. Sommerness is the senior professor of journalism in the School of Communication at Northern Arizona University. For purposes of full disclosure, he once, too many years ago than he prefers to count, worked for a publication that was owned by a corporation that also owned *Barron’s*, the publisher of Professor Munneke’s book.

REVISITING COMMON PRELAW ASSUMPTIONS

Eileen Doyle Crane J.D.
Utah Valley University

There are many statements made in the training of pre-law advisors that are understood to be true. I taught them to my students for fourteen years before I went to law school myself and confronted them from the law student point of view. Some of the assumptions that pre-law students make and pre-law advisors teach are:

- Strong undergraduate students will do fine, wherever they go
- It does not matter what you major in, just gain important skills and you’ll be fine
- You can do anything you

- want with a law degree
- You can figure out what you want to do with your degree later
- A law degree gives you the skills that translate into lots of different work settings
- Lawyers make enough money to pay back their student loans
- A law degree is worth the cost, even if you do not want to practice law
- You can always set up a solo practice

The problem with some of those assumptions is that they do not always work out to be true in an applied setting. Because students are ranked, often from the top of

the class down to the very bottom, otherwise well-educated and well-prepared students do not always do fine, whatever that means. If graduating from law school is fine, than yes, most people do fine. However, it is much more difficult to confront one’s weaknesses once already in law school, with no time to remedy them.

Some of the main weaknesses that should be addressed prior to law school are:

- Students should write at least one 20-page paper every semester; feedback from professors is critical
- Students should write every paper with the idea of publishing it; publish-

“The problem with some of those assumptions is that they do not always work out to be true in an applied setting. Because students are ranked,...otherwise well-educated and well-prepared students do not always do fine,”

REVISITING COMMON PRELAW ASSUMPTIONS - CONTINUED

"I regularly hear lawyers say how flexible a law degree is, but they are generally not young, nor did they incur the average US indebtedness of \$100K for law school. But because they have now worked... in a variety of settings, they believe that new law grads can work in lots of different work settings"

ing with a professor deepens skills

- Speed reading skills are critical to LS performance
- Choose courses to enhance skills, not simply to graduate
- Take extra courses to build skills; don't just graduate because you have enough credits
- Accounting, math, stats, science courses, marketing, and business development add to the ability to practice

Majoring in an area that gives a person the ability to practice law in a certain area, whether or not it is a law grad's first choice, will help students deal with the stress of getting a job after law school. At least for a time, a lawyer can practice in an area she is competent and prepared in, while waiting to evolve her practice into another area more desirable, which takes time.

Many people assume that a law grad can do whatever they want with their degree.

Some of the limitations on that assumption are:

- Debt
- Lack of jobs in an area
- Lack of expertise in a certain area in which there are jobs
- Location

An example of how a future law grad interested in real estate can prepare to increase his or her breadth of potential law positions are:

- Get a real estate license while an undergrad
- Network with real estate lawyers while an undergrad
- Do an internship in a real estate section of a law firm

I regularly hear lawyers say how flexible a law degree is, but they are generally not young nor did they incur the average US indebtedness of \$100K for law school. But because they have now, many years later, worked in a variety of settings, they believe that new law grads can work in lots of different work settings.

Critical information for pre-law advisors to share with students about this is:

- The first year courses are those that define most of law practice
- Grades in the first two semesters define, for most students, their opportunities for at least the first 5 years of their career
- Employers in non-traditional settings have legitimate concerns about hiring law grads:
 - *Cost of hiring and training
 - *Fear of losing the

employee to a legal setting

*Doubt about person's abilities, due to choice NOT to practice law

- Law-related work settings make it easier to translate a law degree, such as lobbying, government administrative positions, non-profit organizational development and leadership

Graduating without clear career objectives will leave a law grad without a job. Networking skills and finding a mentor is critical to do early. A mentor needs to:

- Work closely with you all through law school
- Introduce you to other lawyers in both traditional and non-traditional jobs
- Actually encourage their colleagues to hire you

The economic realities of the recent recession mean that:

- The (current, at least) economic value of a law degree has dropped
- NALP reported the loss of 13,000 law jobs in 2009
- New grads will be competing with very experienced lawyers for the same jobs
- Most paid summer work

has diminished or disappeared, leading to higher debt loads at graduation

Students who are pursuing a law degree should know the economic realities of the degree:

- BLS Data on salaries looks encouraging
- However, it counts only full-time employees, employed as lawyers,
- Financial Aid Administrator Saying: "If you live like a lawyer in law school, you'll live like a student when you're a lawyer"

Students who may consider setting up their own practice should know:

- NALP data shows that 33% of law is being practiced in small 2-10 person law settings
- Some firms will support the overhead of new members of the firm for 4-6 months, then the lawyer must pay own overhead
- Overhead in suburban markets--\$4-5K per month
- Billing clients is not the same as collecting fees

MOST IMPORTANT TIPS:

- Your job search starts TODAY



REVISITING COMMON PRELAW ASSUMPTIONS - CONTINUED



"Mentors take pleasure in your success"

- Choose an area of law early and prepare for it
- The economic value of a law degree has decreased
- Getting a job outside of traditional law practice may be harder than it seems and takes EARLY planning

IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

- Success in law school is more than doing well in the classroom
- Critical for students to

- network while undergraduate students
- Shadowing attorneys will alter student perception of what lawyers actually do
- Knowing others who do what you want to do will help you learn ahead of time what to plan for
- Successful networkers are more successful in identifying, obtaining, and succeeding in their jobs

IMPORTANCE OF MENTORS

- Mentors can introduce and

- explain to you the complexities of law practice or non-traditional work settings
- Mentors can introduce you to their colleagues
- Mentors can help you have an easier time making the adjustment to the actual world of legal work
- Mentors take pleasure in your success!

SOCIAL NETWORKING PITFALLS

Amy Urbanek

University of Utah

When I began advising prelaw students, electronic communication consisted of email and online discussion boards. My advice on using these technologies consisted of basic etiquette:

- 1) Use proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation in emails to law schools.
- 2) Address admissions representatives formally with proper titles: "Dear Dean Smith" rather than "hey bob"
- 3) Be mindful of your email address: imtoosexyformy-shirt@aol.com does not give the impression of maturity and professionalism.

"Unfortunately, once all this information hit the internet, it was permanent, potentially available to everyone everywhere, and out of their control"

4) Don't badmouth law schools, their personnel, or other applicants in online discussion boards. Law school personnel read these.

Ah, those were simpler days! Then came Myspace, and Facebook, and digital cameras, and YouTube, and smart phones, and Twitter, and things started to get complicated. Young people flocked to social networking sites, went crazy for YouTube, and purchased smart phones galore. They shared every detail of their lives online, gossiped about each other, uploaded pictures and video with abandon, and shared all this information with people from all over the world that they knew only online. In short, they used these new technologies to do the sorts of things that kids do, but on a much larger scale.

Unfortunately, once all this information hit the internet, it was permanent, potentially

available to everyone everywhere, and out of their control. At first the problems were mostly online versions of the typical difficulties of adolescence, like embarrassing picture getting circulated, and cyberbullying. Soon, however, the adults discovered social networking and things changed.

Once adults were prevalent on these sites, employers soon realized that, through them, they could get information on current and potential employees well beyond the filtered information revealed on resumes. Soon college and graduate school administrators got in on the action as well. Jobs were lost and college admissions denied over information or pictures posted online.

The implications of this new reality can be difficult for young people to grasp. They can understand setting their profiles so only "friends" can



view them, although they don't always like to since it makes meeting new people online harder. What is harder for them to understand is the permanence of online information, and how it might affect them years down the road, even what they share only with friends. An 18 year old can't imagine that his friends may not always be his friends, or that former friends may someday be rivals for the same internships, law school seats, and/or jobs. Limiting what they share often feels like it takes the fun out of social networking. Unfortunately this is reality of the world we live in and they

ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP IN WAPLA

The Purpose of the Western Association of Prelaw Advisors is:

- To enhance the skills of prelaw advisors;
- To advocate the interests of undergraduate students and institutions in the counseling and admissions processes leading to law related careers;
- To promote communication between prelaw advisors, individual law school admissions officers, the Law School Admissions Council, the Educational Testing Service, and other law related organizations.

These purposes will be accomplished through periodic meetings, training of new prelaw advisers, and through other means as the association may devise.

For \$25 per year, a WAPLA member receives:

- The WAPLA newsletter
- A subscription to PLANC Points, the publication of the Prelaw Adviser's National Council
- Eligibility for travel stipends for yearly regional prelaw conferences
- Eligibility for travel stipends for quadrennial national prelaw conferences
- Eligibility for awards for innovative advising programs
- A network of support among prelaw advisors in the region

We're on the Web!
<http://wapla.org>

SOCIAL NETWORKING PITFALLS - CONTINUED

need to understand it and exercise caution and good judgment online.

It can be tricky to preach caution, yet not come across as completely paranoid. I'm not sure I always get the balance right, but now, along with basic etiquette, I include the following advice to my prelaw students:

- 1) Know your privacy settings on social networking sites, and check them regularly since they can change without warning.
- 2) Search for yourself on Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc, regularly during the application cycle to make sure nothing embarrassing can easily be found. Anyone with a facebook profile should definitely check Openbook.
- 3) Check regularly (at least daily during the admissions cycle) for pictures tagged with your name, and untag inappropriate ones.
- 4) Do not give your email

password to anyone, even your nearest and dearest.

- 5) Do not insult, mock or spread rumors about others on facebook, via twitter, or in an email.
- 6) Don't tweet angry! Consider what an Admissions Dean would think about what you are about to put out there.
- 7) Consider keeping your facebook or myspace page very tame, safe, and professional, and using an alternate site, such as Livejournal, or Friendster for fun with your friends, while still exercising a reasonable level of caution and good judgment.

Pictures and video are especially problematic since they aren't much fun if they aren't shared, yet anyone you share them with will have access to them electronically always and forever. Words may be harder to tie to you in the future, but in pictures you are there are for all to see. Do not share any pictures or video online that

you would be devastated for the world to see, including the Admissions Dean at your top choice law school. Therefore:

- 8) Don't take pictures or video of yourself doing anything illegal. You may be having great fun drunkenly stealing a road sign in the middle of the night with your buddies, but don't pull out the camera phone. Even if you only share printed copies, remember, your buddies have scanners, and will likely get drunk again.
- 9) Don't allow naked pictures of yourself to be taken unless you would freely share them with the world. That boyfriend you are currently so in love with may someday be an ex-boyfriend, and a rival for a seat at Harvard.
- 10) You don't need to be completely paranoid. The occasional silly drunken picture from college probably isn't going to keep you out of

law school, but share these only among friends, since sharing with everyone reflects poorly on your judgment. That said, page after page of this kind of picture probably isn't a good idea.

In short, keep in mind that everything you post online has the potential to end up in the email Inbox of a law school admissions officer. You need to be vigilant about what you post for the world to see, and monitor it regularly.

