Thirty Calvin students attended Pre-Law Day activities, along with nine individuals from other colleges and universities (the program was publicized and open to Pre-Law students from Andrews University, Aquinas College, Central Michigan University, Cornerstone University, Grand Valley State University, Hope College, Western Michigan University and Wheaton College as well).

“We felt the entire event was very valuable for Pre-Law students and wanted to share this unique opportunity to attend with other undergraduate institutions in the area,” according to Dr. Joel Westra, Calvin College Pre-Law Advisor. “We were also able to coordinate the event with Calvin's Admissions Office to coincide with a planned college recruiting day. The college publicized this particular Mondays at Calvin session as Pre-Law Day, and we had fifteen high school students who also attended, giving them excellent exposure to Calvin in general, and our Pre-Law Program more specifically.”

Pre-Law Day started with Why Become an Attorney, a panel discussion featuring seven Calvin alumni attorneys from the West Michigan area who practice law in a variety of fields. The attorneys talked with students about what their work entails and why they decided on careers in law and then answered questions from the moderator, Perrin Rynders ('82) from Varnum Law. The panel included Charles Ash ('95) from Warner Norcross & Judd, Laura Bakker ('80) from the Michigan Court of Appeals, Ana Stutler Gezon, Christopher Haven ('98) from Meijer, Inc., and Jeff Van Winkle ('82) from Clark Hill. Kathryn Post, a junior at Calvin, noted that the panel was the most insightful aspect of Pre-Law Day for her. “It was very helpful to meet lawyers with a range of backgrounds and experiences. Their discussions exposed me to a variety of tangible ways I could use a law degree in the future and convinced me to continue exploring the legal field. I was also able to make connections that led to my first law internship.”

Calvin junior Andrew Oppong expanded further on the value of the opening panel, noting that “it cemented the notion that there is not an ‘absolute’ direction one must take, if and when one decides to pursue a career in law. Each of the attorneys had vastly different experiences, and to hear them share their stories was very thought-provoking and reassuring.”

As part of the event, eleven law schools participated in a law school recruiting fair throughout the day, talking with students about programs, opportunities, and admissions at their particular institutions. The schools included Detroit Mercy, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Michigan State University, Ohio Northern University, Pepperdine, Toledo College of Law, University of Illinois, University of Michigan, Valparaiso, Wayne State University and Western Michigan University Cooley Law School.

Matt Seafield, a Calvin College junior, appreciated being able to engage with a number of law school recruiters. “The recruiting fair gave me an opportunity to learn more about the schools that I intend to apply to, as well as information about the potential to receive scholarships. In particular, Jim Gash and Pepperdine Law really intrigued me because of the obvious passion at the school towards insuring justice through its Global Justice Program.”

Three representatives from law schools also led workshop sessions throughout the day. Jacob Baska (Notre Dame) shared How Law Schools Read Applications; Jim Gash (Pepperdine) led Law School Admission by the Numbers: LSAT Scores, GPA & Other Factors and also An Attorney's Role in Global Justice; and Charles Roboski (Michigan State University) presented What Makes a Good Personal Statement? Additionally, a mock law school class was led by Tracey Brame (Western Michigan University Cooley).

“I found all of the sessions to be very valuable, and I appreciated walking through the process of writing a personal statement and examining how law schools read applications, as it gave me great insight into what recruiters and admission counselors are searching for,” noted Oppong. “The mock law school class was a very effective simulation and showed me that the Socratic Method I am being exposed to here at Calvin is going to serve me very well in law school.”

Alumni attorneys were invited to attend the morning discussion panel to meet and interact with the students afterwards. At the, close of the Pre-Law Day sessions, a special (continued on next page)
Pre-Law Day (continued from page 1)

networking reception welcomed numerous local alumni attorneys to interact with Pre-Law Program participants. The day closed with the showing of Remand, a documentary film poignantly demonstrating how a simple suggestion made by two Pepperdine law students led to deep and systemic changes in the Ugandan criminal justice system, through Pepperdine Law’s Global Justice Program, benefitting thousands of people in Africa.

Seafield concluded, “As a result of the program and sessions at Pre-Law Day, I feel much more prepared to begin the law school application process, and I have a rough idea of how my career may begin to take off.”

“While I don’t anticipate that we will offer Pre-Law Day as an annual event, we certainly hope to repeat the program at some point in the future,” noted Westra. “The response was overwhelmingly positive from all of the college student participants — as well as from the high school students who were considering Calvin, recruiting fair laws, the session leaders, and attending alumni.”

Support Calvin’s Pre-Law Program

We would welcome your active involvement in supporting Calvin’s Pre-Law Program, as well as your financial assistance for our efforts!

If you live in the general Grand Rapids area, contact the Pre-Law Advisor, Dr. Joel Westra, for more information about our programs and opportunities to get involved in supporting students, including:

• mentoring a Pre-Law student
• allowing a student to job shadow with you for a day
• volunteering to be featured at one of our Pre-Law Lunch events when you share your career path and job information with a small group of students
• offering an internship at your workplace for one of our students

If you live outside Grand Rapids, there still may be opportunities for mentoring remotely, job shadowing for students who live in your geographical area, or leading a Pre-Law Lunch if you plan to be in Grand Rapids for some reason during the academic year.

Additionally, financial support helps us to continue providing great opportunities for Pre-Law students as they explore their future career path. Dedicated finances are regularly used in the Pre-Law Program to sponsor a Pre-Law lunch or lecture, provide funding for student job shadowing opportunities, purchase books for our Pre-Law Library, cover ancillary costs involved in leading an effective Pre-Law Interim class, as well as to fund other aspects of our program. From small donations to large contributions that endow a Pre-Law scholarship at Calvin can be discussed with Joel Westra (616/526-6727) or Melanie Lyons in the Calvin College Development Office (616/526-7745).

Calvin Alumni Attorney Groups

Calvin alumni attorney groups have formed in Grand Rapids and Chicago to provide opportunities for networking and for supporting Calvin’s Pre-Law Program. For more information, contact Calvin’s Alumni Office (alumni@calvin.edu, 616/526-7068).

PRE-LAW FACTS: Calvin Students and Alums

- 113 students participated in Calvin’s Pre-Law Program in 2016-17, with 39 of those students graduating this year. Those students represented 27 different majors and minors, most commonly Political Science/International Relations (36%) and History (9%).
- In 2016-17, the Pre-Law Advisor participated in 103 advising sessions with current students, 33 sessions with alumni law school applicants, and 5 meetings with prospective pre-law Calvin students.
- Two seniors and nineteen alumni completed the LSAT during 2015-16 (the most recent year for which data from the LSAC is available).
- The average LSAT score for 2015-16 test takers was 160.6 (approximately the 81st percentile) against a national median score of 155.1 (on a scale of 120-180), continuing a general upward trend for Calvin-affiliated graduates.
- Of the twenty-one individuals who took the LSAT during 2015-16, seventeen applied to law school, twelve were admitted to one or more law schools, and nine of them matriculated.
- Top law schools to which these individuals were admitted during 2015-16 included: Boston College, Boston University, Duke University, George Washington University, Indiana University, Notre Dame and Vanderbilt University. Additional competitive law schools included American University, Brooklyn Law School, University of Denver, DePaul University, Loyola University (Chicago), Michigan State University, Northeastern University, Pepperdine University, Seattle University, and University of San Diego.

Sessions Offered for Calvin Students

Although Pre-Law Day formed the primary activity for the 2016-17 academic year, additional meetings and sessions were offered to Pre-Law students as well.

In the fall, admissions representatives from Regent University met with interested students over lunch to talk about their law school program. In the spring, Prof. Brant Lee (University of Akron School of Law) shared his expertise and personal experiences in an excellent program for Calvin’s Pre-Law participants considering immigration and refugees, both historically and in today’s society.

The Cooley Law School Innocence Project, an organization dedicated to freeing individuals who have been wrongfully-convicted in Michigan, presented a session on campus discussing the causes of wrongful convictions and detailing specific cases they have been involved in. The Project is the only DNA-based innocence organization in Michigan, and they have received, reviewed, and evaluated over 5,000 requests for Assistance. They have a number of current cases in various stages of court preparation status and several hundred more that are under review or being investigated.

The Dean of Admissions for Wayne State University Law School spoke to students about how to write their law school application personal statements. In another session, Prof. Michael Schutt from Regent University School of Law detailed information about Regent’s Institute for Christian Legal Studies. Pre-Law Program students were invited to an on-campus session on environmental law led by Joel Visser (’91) from the Washington D.C. office of Sidley Austin LLP.

Fifteen law schools recruited Calvin students in on-campus visits during the 2016-17 academic year.