Second Successful Pre-Law Day Held at Calvin

In October 2018, Calvin’s Pre-Law Program held its second biennial Pre-Law Day, a day-long conference designed especially for students considering a legal career. With sessions led by Calvin alumni attorneys and law school admissions representatives, the event provided extensive information and excellent networking opportunities for current and potential members of the Pre-Law Program.

Fifty students attended the event; the majority of participants were Calvin students, but attendees also came from Cornerstone University, Western Michigan University, Grand Valley State University, and Hope College, since invitations had been extended to a number of area college and university Pre-Law Programs. The conference was scheduled to coincide with a Calvin College recruiting day, in order to provide potential Calvin students with a snapshot of the services the college provides for Pre-Law students; ten of the attendees were high school seniors considering a future legal career.

The two morning sessions included panels comprised of Calvin alumni and contacts who hold J.D. degrees. Most are practicing law in some capacity, with several working in occupations that utilize their legal training but are not directly in a practicing capacity. Why Become an Attorney featured Charles Ash (Warner Norcross and Judd), Roland Lindh (Roland Lindh, Esq.), Robert Nederhood (Foley & Lardner LLP), Robert Lee Schout (The Schout Company), Julie Westra (Priority Health), and Sarah Yore-VanOosterhout (Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates), and was moderated by Randy Vogelzang, from Calvin’s Development Office. Daily Life as an Attorney spotlighted a variety of career paths and included Mary Bonnema (McGarry Bair), Rachel Bouman (Library of Congress), Ana Stutler Devereaux (Michigan Immigrant Rights Center), Nate Knapper (Federal Bureau of Investigation), and Justin VanDenHeuvel (VanDenHeuvel Law Office).

The afternoon was comprised of panels led by admissions representatives from eight law schools. How Law Schools Read Applications included perspectives from Indiana University Maurer School of Law, Ohio Northern University’s Pettit College of Law, Michigan State University College of Law, Western Michigan University Cooley Law School, and Notre Dame Law School. The final panel of the day, How to Prepare a Good Law School Application, was led by individuals from Wayne State University Law School, University of Cincinnati College of Law, and University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.

During breaks throughout the day, the law school admissions representatives staffed a mini-law school forum at the conference, providing information to students and answering questions about their institutions and about law school in general.

According to Calvin Pre-Law Program Advisor Joel Westra, “Our first event in 2016 was a great success, and this second conference was certainly just as valuable for the students, with a higher number of participants involved and more alumni attorneys on the program. We had excellent feedback from students, attorneys, and from the law school representatives, and we look forward to repeating the event in 2020.”

Support Calvin’s Pre-Law Program

The Pre-Law Program relies on both direct financial assistance and active involvement to meet our ongoing mission to provide valuable support for Pre-Law students as they explore future career paths, as well as to ensure the sustainability of the Program. We are currently in the midst of a fundraising campaign to endow the student-related programming costs and hope to raise $100,000 by the close of 2019, a goal we can only meet with your financial support. (If you are located near Grand Rapids or Chicago, you may have already received a letter from Jon Van Gorp or Perrin Rynders.) Some of the annual costs for the Pre-Law Program include:

- Lunch event: $100
- Interim Class: $500
- Annual Newsletter: $800
- Biennial Pre-Law Day: $3000
- Biennial Chicago Trip: $3000
- Donations can be sent using the enclosed Business Reply Envelope (with a notation that the gift is for the Pre-Law Program), or given online at: https://calvin.edu/go/pre-law.

We also rely on alumni volunteer support as part of our regular programming efforts. Dr. Joel Westra can provide information about opportunities to interact directly with students, including:

- mentoring a Pre-Law student
- allowing a student to job shadow for a day
- volunteering as a Pre-Law Lunch speaker
- providing an internship at your worksite for a Calvin Pre-Law student
Pre-Law Facts: Calvin Students and Alums

- 114 students participated in Calvin’s 2018-19 Pre-Law Program, with 20 of those students graduating this year. The Pre-Law Advisor participated in 56 advising sessions with current students, nine sessions with alumni law school applicants, and 25 meetings with prospective pre-law Calvin students.
- In 2017-18, seven seniors and 28 alumni took the LSAT (most recent year for which data from LSAC is available), identical to the previous year and reflecting the currently stable, post-recession job market for law school graduates. These test takers had an average LSAT score of 154.7 (approximately the 62nd percentile) against a median score of 151 (on a scale of 120-180). The 5-year average for Calvin LSAT test takers is 156.9 (approximately the 70th percentile).
- Of the 28 individuals who took the LSAT in 2017-18, 20 applied to law school, 18 were admitted to one or more law schools, and 14 matriculated.
- Top law schools to which the 2017-18 applicants were admitted included: American University, Duke University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, Indiana University, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, University of California–Davis, University of California–Los Angeles, University of Colorado, University of Houston, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of North Carolina, University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, and Wake Forest. Additional competitive law schools included Cardozo School of Law, Case Western Reserve, DePaul University, Loyola University, Michigan State, Pennsylvania State University, Seton Hall, University of Connecticut, University of Miami, University of Richmond, Vermont Law School, Villanova University, and Wayne State University.

Calvin Pre-Law Program

DeVos Communication Center 261H 180 E. Beltline SE
616/526-5737 Grand Rapids, MI 49546
www.calvin.edu/academic/prelaw

Pre-Law Director: Dr. Joel H. Westra
Program Coordinator: Ellen Hekman

Calvin Alumni Attorney Groups

Calvin alumni attorney groups are active in both Michigan and Chicago, providing networking opportunities, social events, and support for the Pre-Law Program.

The Calvin Law Professionals of Michigan (CLPM) sponsors periodic speakers and social events for members and area attorneys, and the Chicago group schedules periodic meetings and social activities as well.

Anyone interested in more information or in becoming a member of these groups can contact the Calvin Alumni Association at alumni@calvin.edu. To join the CLPM online, go to: https://calvin.edu/go/clpm

2018-19 Programs and Sessions for Students

The Pre-Law Program gives Calvin students who are considering legal careers a number of opportunities each year to explore the choice of law schools, learn about various specialties, and consider potential paths. Small groups of students meet with legal professionals in different fields and practices and with representatives from law schools.

More than 60 students attended the year’s events (in addition to the 50 participants at Pre-Law Day), including a fall mixer, five on-campus learning sessions, an off-site meeting in Washington DC, and a mock LSAT providing an opportunity for students to experience taking the standardized test. On campus Pre-Law Lunch sessions included:

Choosing a Law School

In March, nine Pre-Law students who were in Washington DC (participating in the spring semester off-campus program) attended a session with five Calvin alumni. Rachel Bouman (Library of Congress), Nathanael Dedonge (US Department of Treasury), Josh Kuyers (US Department of Navy), Matt Reiffer (American Council of Engineering Companies), and Ben Shoemaker (Mayer Brown) spent an evening with the students, talking about their law school experiences, career paths and work life.