Self-Assessment

How do I find out if a law school will be a good fit for me?

A good place to begin your search is with a self-assessment. This is where you answer a series of general questions about the different aspects of the law school experience. From this self-assessment you’ll get an idea of the different kinds of environmental and academic conditions in which you are most comfortable. After you determine your specific strengths, preferences, and material needs, you can then bring in the results of your self-assessment for a meeting with the campus pre-law advisor to help focus your search for a law school. Here’s a small series of representative questions for you to answer to get a more specific idea of what you need from a law school:

1. Where am I most comfortable working? In large, busy settings? Or do I thrive in more closely knit and personal surroundings?
2. How important is student body diversity for my educational goals? Do I want many cultural influences to challenge my points of view or do I wish to focus my educational pursuits among those who share similar cultural and intellectual reference points for me to engage with?
3. Am I interested in going to a law school that is faith-based?
4. Would I be in a better position for success by going to a regional or local law school in order to maintain family connections and support networks, or might I be motivated to pursue a school in a bigger job-market city?
6. Am I comfortable where I am or am I chomping at the bit to go someplace new?
7. Based on the kinds of classes I’ve taken (or am taking), what type of law school focus would best serve my interests? Do I have a theoretical orientation? Am I a nuts and bolts thinker? Am I motivated to take foreign language classes during law school? Does a dual M.A./J.D. look especially appealing?

Law school is so competitive. Shouldn’t I be happy just to get accepted somewhere?

The work you’re going to have to do as a law student will be all-consuming. Since success in law school demands complete attention, make sure that you find a school in which you’ll be comfortable so you can commit yourself fully to your studies. If you’re overwhelmed by large classes or feel suffocated by a homogeneous student body then you’ll have less of yourself to devote to your studies. So take what you’ve found from your self-assessment and compare it to a few dozen schools to find which ones might be a good fit. Another benefit to this self-investigative process is that it makes filling out applications all that much easier later on when you sit down to tell schools why you’re a great applicant. A great place to begin is the LSAC website. The search outlines available are excellent and allow students a variety of options to explore. Students can conduct a quick search comparing their GPA and LSAT scores with past average scores for hundreds of institutions. Students can also take advantage of the “detailed” search option.