

Law Related Education

The newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association's Committee on Law Related Education

So, You Think You Want to Go to Law School?

BY ZACHARY T. JONES

Introduction

The legal profession is one that is often discussed, highly respected, and rarely demystified. For most students, the journey into the career field may be challenging, but not impossible. One of the biggest misconceptions about the legal career is how daunting the practitioners can be. If you have family, friends, or mentors who are in the legal profession, the first thing you should do is speak to them. When you have the idea that you want to pursue law, speak to someone who pursued that career.

Me

I can vividly remember the moment

I conceptualized attending law school. I remember each step I took to get in. While my journey may be atypical, I would not classify it as extraordinary. In fact, I would classify it as an inspiration for all those who wish to attend law school but feel like they do not know when and where to start.

Mentorship/First Conversation

The first thing any aspiring law student should do is talk to someone knowledgeable. It does not matter if that person is a current law student or a practicing attorney. Speak with them about their journey to the legal profession. Ask them to be candid in all answers. Ask them about the challenges and benefits

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So, You Think You Want to Go to Law School?

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Update on Artificial Intelligence in the Illinois Courts

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Update on Artificial Intelligence in the Illinois Courts

BY JUDGE MIKE CHMIEL

TO SOME EXTENT, THE FURY

INVOLVED with Artificial Intelligence (AI) has slowed, but be advised AI continues to evolve and impact the fray of legal practice in Illinois and beyond. Reliable AI tools have become available for a price and for free. Courts have continued to study AI, how it is being used, and how it might be

used. Here, ChatGPT 3.5 is deployed below to provide Open AI's disposition on the status of the use of AI in Courts, through use of the internet. Further below, an Administrative Order of the Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit is provided to state what might be the first policy and plan of a Court on AI in Illinois. Its design is intentionally simple and broad to hopefully be effective along the lines suggested in it.

What is the current state of the use of AI in the courts of the United States?

The use of AI in U.S. courts is evolving, with both state and federal systems gradually incorporating it to enhance efficiency while carefully managing ethical concerns. Various courts are exploring AI's potential in areas

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Law School

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of working in the legal field. No matter what school they attended or what they do for work, the common denominator will always be that law school is challenging. It is best to know what you are committing to and what you may have to sacrifice to succeed. Relationship building is a foundational skill for all attorneys, so it is best to develop it early.

I have had multiple mentors who have guided me throughout my journey. Having attorneys as mentors is imperative because they have helped me navigate the different areas of practice within the law. They highlighted the aspects of working in different legal spaces and how to thrive in those spaces. Additionally, they gave me insights on how to network effectively and build a brand within the legal community. I was also mentored in my first year of law school by a 2L. The knowledge she gave me was invaluable. She guided me on aspects of law school that are crucial for success, like preparing for class, how to outline, and how to study for final exams. My mentors have consistently strengthened my understanding of what it means to be a law student and a legal professional.

Creating A Timeline

Hopefully, the conversations you have help you discern if you are ready to go to law school or if you need more time. No matter which way you may lean, the next step is to look at a calendar. Some essential traits to succeed in the profession are organizational skills and timeliness. Look at a calendar and identify the following: LSAT dates, law school application period, and law school scholarship deadlines.

One of the biggest barriers to entry into the profession is the LSAT. This standardized exam is one way that schools differentiate candidates from each other. All have different experiences with taking this exam. No matter the score, the exam is not indicative of your ability to succeed in law school. It is merely a number to give you an idea of which schools you should apply. How much time a person needs to study for the LSAT and what score they need to attract their desired school is

variable. You must do your own research.

Applying to law school earlier is better than later. However, you want to make sure that you can apply by the school's scholarship deadline. No matter what law school you choose to attend, it will be costly. If you can avoid the excess financial burden by applying before the deadline, great. The earlier you can apply the better.

Application Materials

Your grades and LSAT score open the door for you, but your letters of recommendation and personal statement get you a seat. The latter has so much value because they highlight what you can individually contribute to the incoming class and ultimately the legal profession. Your letters of recommendation should come from people who know you well. While you may not be able to tell them what to say, be sure to seek people who can speak highly of your character. Your personal statement should describe who you are, what traits or stories define you, and how these will lead to you having a positive impact on the incoming class. You will need more than one draft of a personal statement. Have a variety of people give you feedback on your statement. (Hint: Ask the person with whom you first talked to provide feedback.) When asking for feedback, ask, "Does this story accurately depict me?"

Conclusion

While the journey to law school may be intimidating and stressful, you do not have to do it alone. There are organizations created to promote and develop the next generation of attorneys. The Law School Mentor is an organization that was created to help connect aspiring law students to current law students and legal professionals. They have over 50 people who are willing to be a mentor to those who reach out. A simple online search and an email goes a long way. No matter where you are in your journey in the field of law, you are at the right place. Keep moving forward. ■

Zachary T. Jones is a 2026 J.D. candidate at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Zachary is the Pre-Law Director for the Midwest Black Law Students Association and a law clerk for Dussias Wittenberg Koenigsberger LLP.

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Artificial Intelligence in the Illinois Courts

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like legal research, drafting documents, and case management, aiming to streamline internal processes and assist self-represented litigants. However, the judicial system is cautious about how AI, particularly generative AI, might affect fairness, confidentiality, and decision-making.

In early 2024, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) released interim guidelines to help courts navigate these challenges. This includes advice on avoiding the use of biased AI tools, safeguarding

confidentiality when using AI for research or drafting, and understanding the risks of relying on AI-generated information, which may be inaccurate or biased. Courts are also developing guidelines for integrating AI while ensuring ethical compliance, such as avoiding AI-driven *ex parte* communication and protecting impartiality [sources omitted].

Some courts and legal professionals are already required to disclose the use of generative AI in filings and legal documents. Judges and attorneys are

also encouraged to maintain technical competence, ensuring they understand how AI tools work and when it is appropriate to use them [sources omitted]. Despite these advances, there is still a strong emphasis on human oversight to maintain the integrity of the legal process.

This balance between innovation and caution is essential as AI's role in the legal system continues to grow.

SOURCE: chatgpt.com/c/67082aca-0e94-8011-8115-d294ece34749.

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ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2024-23
22ND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
MCHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS
(Artificial Intelligence Policy and Plan)

WHEREAS, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has existed in various forms over the last half century or so.

WHEREAS, over the last couple of years, AI has come into the spotlight of the world with advances in generative artificial intelligence capturing attention and luring folks into environments in which they can expeditiously and economically tap databases to help with various things.

WHEREAS, as in other sectors, the legal community has had to deal with AI to the best of its ability, in that participants engage AI at different levels, ranging from those who create algorithms to drive AI, to those who simply realize AI is impacting a situation in which they find themselves.

WHEREAS, what has become important is that we deal with AI. *First*, we need to learn what AI is and what is involved with it. *Next*, we need to learn how to manage the AI which is being used in the environments in which we find ourselves. *Lastly*, we need to address AI.

WHEREAS, in addressing AI, we need to arrive at rules which govern the use of AI where we are responsible for the forum, as a judge is with his or her courtroom and assignment. As such, judges should consider standing order provisions to address AI.

WHEREAS, caution should be used in developing rules, in that AI is in the community and being used. AI also provides access to justice which is important in helping people engage legal systems and buttress the Rule of Law.

WHEREAS, in addressing AI, participants in a forum should understand the rules and the parameters for using such a powerful tool, as with Rule 137 of the Supreme Court of Illinois which requires pleadings to be well-grounded and not interposed for an improper purpose.

WHEREAS, in addressing AI, professionals should recall that the practice of a profession is a privilege which is heavily regulated, as with the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct of 2010, which require candor among many other things.

WHEREAS, similarly, the Judicial Code of Judicial Conduct of 2023 imposes obligations on judges to act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary.

WHEREAS, in the AI world, the landscape keeps changing and evolving, leaving little if any time to catch up; as such, it is incumbent upon the Judges of the Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit of the State of Illinois to engage AI to the extent possible, given current assignments, obligations, and resources.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Participants and professionals in cases in this Circuit shall consider the admonitions set forth above and engage AI carefully, especially with regard to the rules which govern the use of AI directly and indirectly.
2. The Judges of this Circuit shall consider the admonitions set forth above and engage AI carefully, as with the use of AI in their courtrooms and with their own use of AI.
3. The Judges of this Circuit shall endeavor to:
 - A. Learn about AI;
 - B. Consider and learn about available legal research tools which utilize AI;
 - C. Learn how AI can otherwise be used; and
 - D. Implement Standing Orders which address the use of AI.

DATED: October 9, 2024

ENTERED:

Michael J. Chmiel

MICHAEL J. CHMIEL

Chief Judge

Judge Mike Chmiel is a long-time member of the ISBA, former Chair of what is now its Commercial Banking, Collections, and Bankruptcy Section Council, and one of its current newsletter editors. He serves as Chief Judge of the 22nd Judicial Circuit of the State of Illinois, serves on the AI Task Force of the Illinois Judicial Conference, and has devoted certain attention to AI as a coordinator, presenter, and participant in various programs on AI. He can be reached at mjchmiel@22ndcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov.

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ILLINOIS BAR FOUNDATION

Champions

Dear Future Champions,

At least twice a year at ISBA Annual and Mid-Year Meetings, we are pitched by colleagues and the Illinois Bar Foundation to become a “Champion.” But what is a Champion really, and what’s in it for us?

A **champion**, by definition, is a person who fights or argues for a cause or on behalf of someone else. As lawyers, we have the unique opportunity to make a positive impact on society by upholding justice and advocating for those in need. We have the power to shape laws, defend the innocent, and ensure fair resolution of disputes. By definition, we are champions, for our clients, our legal system and for our communities, but through the statewide reach of the Illinois Bar Foundation, we have the opportunity to increase our impact even more.

The [Champions of the Illinois Bar Foundation](#) were established more than 40 years ago and are comprised of a distinguished group of attorney and non-attorney Foundation supporters who believe in the value of justice and philanthropy. By committing to a pledge payable over ten years, Champions help create sustainable long-term funding support for more than 50,000 individuals and their families each year statewide. These funds make a direct difference for our colleagues and their families when they struggle with life-changing illness or injury through the support of the IBF’s Warren Lupel Lawyers Care Fund, or when our neighbors seek low or no-cost legal aid services to help them stay in their homes, obtain guardianship of a loved one or an order of protection from an abuser, or better understand their rights and responsibilities as workers and citizens in Illinois.

Champions pledges:

- Start as low as \$100 per year, or less than \$9 per month
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- Recognition on the IBF website, social media and publications such as the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Illinois Lawyer Now, and the Illinois Bar Journal.

So while you may already be a champion in your profession, join me in helping to make Illinois an even better place by becoming a Champion of the Illinois Bar Foundation today. To secure your pledge, use this QR code or contact Jessie Reeves at jreeves@illinoisbarfoundation.org.

Sincerely,

Jessica Durkin
Champions Chair
Illinois Bar Foundation

