AILET

4 Things To Do Before Choosing a Law School

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How tough can it be to choose a law school?

There are rankings available on the internet and we can just go with the top 10 or 20, wouldn't it be easier to just follow those?

NO! NO! NO!

Ask anyone, Ask everyone.

A law school is not defined by shiny buildings or random rankings. There are various criteria that need to be met when you're deciding on a law school to attend. It needs to have a little bit of everything and everything of something.

No single college is best in EVERYTHING. Make your choices depending on yourself and not on the shiny package advertisements you see, try digging into that information, you'll understand my point.

So how to decide which law school to attend?

Follow these 4 steps

Step 1: Make a blueprint

This applies to everyone. Yes, even to you AIR 1.

Understand yourself before you try to define your perfect law college. Which area of law interests you? What would you like to do after law school?

So how do we do it before going to law school? Easy. Go ahead and talk to atleast 3-4 of your seniors from different law schools. Tell them to meet you for a coffee (order one for them and video call) and ask them to tell you some basic things about the various subjects that are taught at law school and the career choices that are available.

Ask them to tell you about their internship experiences in those career choices (or job experience).

This way you will know what you really want to do.

Even if you don't figure this out, it is okay. But some brainstorming would definitely help.

Do not make a strict list, prepare a top 3 and unless something life-changing happens at law school, you will fall in the ballpark of your list.

Now you know what you want.

Step 2: Research

Find the colleges on the internet.

Yes, I know I said the rank lists should not make your decision for you but I did not say they are a total waste. They are helpful in giving you an idea about the colleges that people know.

Once you have done that, find out these things about the college

1. Past 5-year placement records
2. Number of faculty per student and qualification of faculty
3. Number of competitions the college has won in the last decade (famous moots, debates etc)
4. The infrastructure of the college and hostel.
5. The schedule of classes, holidays and Internship breaks.
6. Notable Alumni
7. The city and area where it's located

Do not just depend on the internet, call the students or if possible either visit personally or ask someone in that city to visit.

Make sure you talk to at least 5 of the current students privately.

Step 3: Administration

Learn about the administration. How does the administration deal with the students?

Do they penalize the student for every minor mistake or do they consider a second chance?

What is their attitude towards those who submit fees a little late?

Do they spend enough on student welfare and other activities?

The number of decision-makers with a law degree.

All these questions hold great value in determining whether you should attend a law school or not.

Wonder why?

Ask any senior, there comes a time in those 5 years when the students and administration come face to face and disagree on a certain issue.

Will the administration try to mediate their way out of the disagreement or harsher punishments are given for every ounce of free speech?

Do they support the student bar association or is it just on paper?

Find the answers to these questions before you make that call. If you do not think these are important, ask someone in their 4th or 5th year whether these questions matter, you'll know.

Step 4: City

The city where the college is situated is very important and it's not just due to malls and theatres.

Ask around about the students of Mumbai University and how they are getting into the top law firms when students from better-ranked NLUs are having a tough time getting into them.

The city of Mumbai has offices of all major law firms, all major companies, a High Court, and several lower courts/tribunals. This allows the students to intern all year at these places and not just read about the law in books but experience the real world after classes.

On the contrary, ask someone whose college is 40 KM out of the city, ask them about the time that gets wasted commuting and whether they get any similar opportunities?

Ask them whether in times of internship, do they pay double rent; one in the city where they intern and one obviously where their college is situated.

Also, let's talk about malls, theatres, and restaurants. Imagine travelling all day just to get a burger because food delivery 40 KM out of the city is a dream and even OLA/Uber deny service so you have to either take the scarce bus service or book a car for a day (on your allowance)

This is not an exhaustive list, there are more things that you should/can do before you decide on a college. Let us know in the comments section.

This post was first published in 2020.

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