

Southwest Association of Prelaw Advisors



SWAPLA *INSIGHTS*

Welcome to our first issue!

Spring 2020 is here, and although we are facing new challenges with the COVID-19 virus that is affecting many aspects of our everyday life throughout our country and around the world, we also have the opportunity of reflection, renewal, and growth.

We are excited to launch our inaugural SWAPLA *INSIGHTS* Newsletter, whose purpose is to keep our SWAPLA membership informed and involved in everything related to prelaw advising, practices, and events updates. You can participate by writing an article related to or sharing your best practices for prelaw advising. As we want the newsletter to be as relevant and useful as possible to you, we look forward to hearing your comments on the first issue. Please email us with your thoughts and ideas at ana.alvarez@utsa.edu.

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A message from the President



*Michelle Payne, J.D., Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Political
Science, Texas Wesleyan
University.
SWAPLA President*

A LOOK BACK, 2019

(April) SWAPLA Conference in Oklahoma City was both fun and informative. The host law schools (Oklahoma City University School of Law, the University of Oklahoma College of Law, and the University of Tulsa, College of Law) were amazing. Kudos to the executive board, and especially to conference chair and VP Ana Alvarez!! It was “a beautiful mornin”!

We established the location for our 2021 Annual Conference as Dallas Texas, April 7-10, 2021.

(September –Oct) SWAPLA Caravan was highly successful, including eight site locations (TX Tech, OU, UTD, Baylor, TAMU, TX State, UTSA, and UT-Austin) over two hectic weeks, where up to 123 law schools and 604 students participated. The Caravan’s success is directly linked to meticulous organization by Caravan Director, Hong Escobar and Treasurer Barbara Kirby, members bringing students to the events and chiefly, the support from our law school friends.

The LSAC Houston Law forum saw members bringing numerous students to the event. SWAPLA “manned” the advising table at the Forum. We advised about 60 students.

SWAPLA sponsored attendance at APLA conferences, broadened subsidies for the LSAC Houston forum and educational initiatives, such as regional Access Lex seminar, and invited LSAC Ambassadors to our campuses.

Committees formed at the Annual continue to meet- and while you will hear back from each of these committees in June, please note that this newsletter and the current membership drive are direct results of that committee work.

A LOOK FORWARD, 2020

SWAPLA converted from a fiscal year to a calendar reporting year, so membership dues are now due. Please support SWAPLA through your membership, and don’t be afraid to recruit a colleague!

PLANC Quadrennial Conference, New Orleans- June 2020: This national conference is a combined effort of all APLAs and replaces our annual conference. We will hold our annual meeting and elections at this time- please watch for subsidy information, committee requests, or calls for volunteers via this newsletter and website.

2020 Caravan will lead up to the Oct 17, 2020 LSAC Houston Law Forum- we “plan” to include the eight previous sites and add Hendrix to the stops!!

2021 Annual Conference: Dallas Texas- details to come.

In closing, I want to recognize our current Executive Board- Ana, Lori, Barbara, Hong, Matt, Sandy, Jill, Alicia, Julie and so many more, for all you do. I especially want to thank Matt, who has graciously served as SWAPLA webmaster the past three years. Matt has taken a new position and is graciously serving out his term, despite moving across the country. I have no idea how we can ever replace Matt’s expertise or comradery, but on behalf of SWAPLA, we thank you, and wish you and your family the best. I know one day when you are shoveling snow off your sidewalk you will remember our sunny Texas/Arkansas skies and smiling faces with a bit of homesickness!! Thank you, and all the best Matt.

Dr Michelle Payne, JD, SWAPLA President



SWAPLA INSIGHTS

Volunteers are needed to assist with SWAPLA's efforts to expand outreach to community college advisors. If you are interested, please contact Dr. Julie Lantrip at julie.lantrip@tccd.edu.

For updates on the Coronavirus Disease, COVID-19, visit the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Please follow SWAPLA on social media!



SWAPLA INSIGHTS

Dr. Pamela Waldron-Moore

*Chair, Division of Social
and Behavioral Sciences*

*Leslie R. Jacobs Endowed
Professor*

*Department of Political
Science*

*Xavier University of
Louisiana*



Best Practices for Prelaw Advising

Prelaw Advising at Xavier University of Louisiana, by
Pamela Waldron-Moore, Ph.D.

As a political scientist, I believe there are many approaches to advising students to be/do their best, regardless of their fields of interest. In highlighting student advising at Xavier, I recognize that only in concerted dialog we can create a standard for student achievement. I am guided by Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer: "Lord, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things I can and the Wisdom to know the difference." Thus, I engage practices designed to empower students to realize their best selves. Employing *B.E.S.T.* practices, I extend strategies for success not just to pre-law students but to all students desiring to achieve life goals/skills.

One benefit of using your newsletter as a promotional tool is that you can reuse content from other marketing materials, such as press releases and market studies. While your main goal of distributing a newsletter might be to sell your product or services, the key to a successful newsletter is making it useful to your readers. A great way to add useful content to your newsletter is to develop and write your own articles, or to include a calendar of upcoming events.

In relation to Law, specifically, four characteristics inform my practices.

1. **B**uilding a prelaw organization to attract interested students who meet fortnightly on campus and/or attend scheduled professional events away from campus. I also create a network of prelaw professionals, who share our institutional values and help develop new understandings via training sessions and tangible funding opportunities for students whose performance exemplifies our shared institutional missions.
2. **E**ngaging/empowering students individually to identify their strengths, their capacity to achieve, be it through leadership of or fellowship within the network.
3. **S**ustaining student development by modeling standards of leadership and resilience which help students understand how to overcome obstacles in their life and sustain their passions.
4. **T**eaching students to envision possibilities with positive strategies for realizing them. Applying healthy time-management and other skills, students learn to be successful.

Advising minority students has been extremely satisfying. Although the practices I use may differ across students and career interests, it is clear that students benefit most from sincere and steady mentorship.

Prelaw Advising at the University of Texas at Arlington, by Amber N. White, J.D.

As Prelaw advisors, we hold a position of trust not just among students we advise, but also law school admissions professionals that we meet at conferences or while on visits to our campus or theirs. It is our duty to maintain this position of trust with these professionals. When we put our name behind a letter recommending a student for law school, we better make sure we know that student well enough to give a solid endorsement.

In the beginning, I wanted to be nice and support my students' endeavors and law school pursuits. Despite that I had only been in the position for a matter of weeks, I found myself shocked to have students requesting -in some cases begging- me for letters of recommendation. It should have been a red flag that of all the professors they had had over the years, the only person they felt they could get a remotely decent letter from was me.

If this is your case, my advice is just say NO! If you do not know the student very well or do not like the look of his or her GPA or LSAT score, just say NO. If after talking with the student, he or she is not quite mature enough to handle law school in spite of having a solid academic performance, just say NO. If after working with a student, you just have a bad feeling, just say NO. I have learned to trust my instinct and have found it to be correct when I think a student should not receive a recommendation from me.

These students will likely reveal themselves to be undeserving of your endorsement or have a *sudden* desire to change careers. But the most important reason to say no to students that we are not so familiar with is that there will come along an utterly amazing student who deserves our highest lauding. We will want to gush about this student to every law school representative, so he or she can have the best chance of admission, but our word will be mud with the law schools. They will not trust us when we say, *I have a great student worthy of admission*. So let's just say NO to recommending students who do not deserve our endorsement!

SWAPLA INSIGHTS

Amber N. White, J.D.

Prelaw Center Director

The University of Texas at Arlington



SWAPLA Officers Visit other APLAs Conferences

During 2019, SWAPLA Board Members attended other Association of Prelaw Advisors' conferences to learn and discuss prelaw concerns nationwide, gain insights on different perspectives, and disseminate some highlights among our SWAPLA membership. SWAPLA hopes to open the same opportunity for more SWAPLA members. More details to come. Here are the post- conference reports.

NAPLA Post-Conference Report

By Lori DeKalb, J.D., Pre-Law Advisor at the University of Oklahoma, and Barbara Kirby, JD, PhD. Director of the Pre-Law Advising Center at The University of Texas at Dallas.

This past summer Lori DeKalb and Barbara Kirby attended the National Association of Pre-Law Advisors (NAPLA) conference in Boston, MA. Here are some of our thoughts about the experience.

Lori: Boston is home to six law schools, and all participated in the conference with at least one conference event being held at each law school. Some of the conference sessions we attended included Compliance as a Purposeful Path for Law Students, Law Degree Versatility: Careers beyond the Courtroom & Boardroom, and Working with LSAC Reports and Data. The conference itself offered a great opportunity to engage with Pre-Law Advisors from the NAPLA area schools, who were friendly and welcoming.

Barbara: I was also struck right away with the positive welcome we received from our counterparts in the North! One interesting session I attended was regarding two surveys focused on how students choose law schools for applications. The “Before the JD” survey from the Association of American Law Schools and the LSAC Survey both give great insights – location and tuition are top factors. Seventy-five percent of laws schools get over 60% of students from their own state, which affirms the pre-Law advisors focus on regional schools. As an exception, private elite law schools matriculate overwhelmingly from out of their region. Students are influenced by hearing from on campus professors about graduate programs and professions other than the law. My conclusion? Pre-law advisors should have high visibility on campus so that students receive a positive message about the legal profession.

SWAPLA INSIGHTS



Left: Lori DeKalb, J.D., Prelaw Advisor. The University of Oklahoma.

Right: Barbara Kirby, J.D., Ph.D. Director, Prelaw Advising Center. The University of Texas at Dallas

Lori: A highlight was listening to Harvard Professor Phil Torrey discuss Harvard's *Crimmigration* Clinic which focuses on immigration consequences of criminal convictions, i.e. the intersection of immigration law and criminal law, where individuals are either barred from entry to the US or deported from the US because of a criminal issue. The number of individuals falling into this area began to rise in the 80's due to the increase in the government's war on drugs and enforcement, coupled with an increase in immigration and a growing increase in anti-immigrant sentiment. Laws that allowed the feds to leverage local governments to enforce immigration laws were passed, which when merged with post-9/11 laws, puts us at our current set of *crimmigration* laws. In immigration proceedings, individuals do not have the full benefit of the constitution because they are not US citizens. The goal of the clinic is the teach students to think outside the box. What does this mean for our advisees? Many areas of law intersect, and it is an exciting time to be studying law.

Barbara: I attended a workshop on personal statements, thinking I might not get any new ideas for my own student workshops. I found that it is always worthwhile to hear a reinforcement of what I am doing right, as well as a new idea or two. We did a very helpful guided freewriting exercise to get students started as they brainstorm about topics. We also saw sessions on Service Learning, Substance Abuse among Law Students, and an interesting panel regarding how market trends impact admissions decisions.

This was a positive, informative, and collegial experience! I hope all of our SWAPLA members will take advantage of the PLANC meeting in New Orleans in June as an opportunity to meet and network with Pre-Law Advisors and Law School Representatives from all over the country. It's worth it!

PCAPLA Post-Conference Report

By Hong Tran Escobar, J.D., Law School Admissions Coach at the University of Texas at Austin.

Pacific Coast Association of Pre-Law Advisors (PCAPLA) hosted its annual conference in Portland, Oregon, on June 4-6, 2019. During the conference, pre-law advisors, law school admissions professionals, and other industry stakeholders gathered to share best practices when advising aspiring law students, including strategies to better serve and address challenges within a law school application.



SWAPLA INSIGHTS

L to R: Mahalley Allen, PCAPLA President Elect; Mimi Huang, Assistant Dean of Admissions at Lewis & Clark Law; and Hong Tran Escobar, Law School Admissions Coach at UT Austin

PCAPLA participants had the wonderful opportunity to visit all three law schools in Oregon: Lewis & Clark Law School, The University of Oregon School of Law, and Willamette University College of Law.

Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, is a gorgeous campus with hiking trails adjacent to Tryon State Park. Minutes from downtown Portland, Lewis & Clark is known for its environmental law program, but the school also has a robust program in criminal law and animal law. The only public law school in Oregon, the University of Oregon School of Law, is located in Eugene, and 70% of their class is from out of state. Ranked #3 in Legal Research and Writing, Oregon Law also offers a conflict and dispute resolution master's program, which is one of the 13 programs nationwide. One of oldest law schools in Pacific Northwest, Willamette University College of Law, is located across the street from Oregon's Capitol in Salem, Oregon. Many of Willamette's students stay in PNW region where they have found success in both public and private sector.

It was easy to see why PCAPLA hosted one of its most successful conferences thus far, with just over 100 attendees

Overall, the PCAPLA conference offered numerous sessions designed to help pre-law advisors support their students during the law school application process. During the session on working with students dealing with mental health issues, colleagues discussed the importance of pre-law advisors balancing the desire to support candidates while keeping in mind that many pre-law advisors are not trained as mental health professionals. Pre-law advisors should refer applicants to mental health resources available on their campus and community, such as the campus counseling center, the ABA Mental Health Toolkit, and the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law's Report on Bar Admissions Questions, which lists each State Bar's position on mental health. If a candidate shares information about his or her mental health condition, law school admissions professionals also want to know whether and how the candidate manages the condition. It is important to discuss with applicants how their pattern of behavior might influence law schools' admissions perceptions.

There was also an informative session on the impact of the Uniform Bar Exam on aspiring law students, with an emphasis on the importance of disclosure of character and fitness issues when submitting a law school application. Relatedly, another session focused on Misconduct & Irregularity (M & I), which occurs when something suspicious is discovered in an application or through applicant's misconduct. Intent is not an element in these cases, but if an M & I allegation is found, it is noted in all of the applicant's CAS documents. While an applicant can appeal an M & I finding, advisors should encourage applicants to make every effort to be forthright in their law school application.

It was easy to see why PCAPLA hosted one of its most successful conferences thus far, with just over 100 attendees.

MAPLA Post-Conference Report

By Ana Alvarez, Ed.D., Prelaw Advisor and Assistant Director, Institute for Law and Public Affairs at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

I had the pleasure –and honor –to attend the Midwest Association of Prelaw Advisors’ (MAPLA) *Wearing Many Hats: The Multi-Faceted Role of the Pre-Law Advisors* Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on September 19 to 21, 2019, and I truly enjoyed it.

I attended the State of the Profession veteran prelaw advisor workshop which was extremely enlightening and fully interactive. Each prelaw advisor was partnered with another colleague and would ask and answer several questions, information that was shared with the group. The next step was to participate in subgroups to discuss strengths, challenges, commonalities, and suggestions as prelaw advisors, and after a brief discussion, we communicated this information to the rest of the cohort. We realized the real and potential impact of prelaw advising on students, undergraduate institutions, law schools, the legal profession, and other constituents. The discussion made us aware of what is working and how we can improve. Throughout all this educational interaction, we generated ideas that we could implement in our institutions, and this activity set the tone for the conference. Martha Kirby, MAPLA President Elect and Conference Chair, and R.J. Holmes-Leopold, Past-President of PLANAC, facilitated the workshop.



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Martha Kirby, using one of the many hats at the MAPLA Conference. Martha serves as the Senior Academic Advisor at the University of Iowa, MAPLA President Elect, and Conference Chair

MAPLA followed the Pacific Coast Association of Pre-Law Advisors (PCAPLA) idea to implement sessions for law school representatives as well and allowed me to learn novel approaches to meet the needs of our diverse membership for future SWAPLA conferences. The Gen Z Applicants: Marketing and Recruiting the Next Generation session covered how law schools are working with the new generation of applicants and develop recruitment strategies for this group of students. The second session, Staying Informed: How to Keep on Top of the Data and News and Help Others to As Well, included the best websites and resources for law schools to use and how to utilize this information to improve admissions work and effective practices for sharing this information with other offices.

As a MAPLA conference participant, I had the opportunity to visit Marquette University Law School, which hosted our day-time conference during one day. Marquette Law is the only law school located in Milwaukee. Joseph D. Kearney, Dean and Professor of Law, expressed that Milwaukee was not the only significant city that had only one law school, comparing it San Antonio, TX, which only has St. Mary's School of Law. The other school in Wisconsin is the University of Wisconsin-Madison that kindly sponsored the night-time for the Brewers Game: Pittsburgh Pirates vs. Milwaukee Brewers with a voucher to pay for food at the game. It was a night of fun.

Scott A. Hendrickson serves as MAPLA President and Martha Kirby as President Elect and Conference Chair. Seventy-seven prelaw advisors and 46 law school representatives attended the MAPLA conference, and all were very friendly and welcoming. Certainly, the MAPLA Conference was an absolute success. It was interesting, illuminating, and fun!

LSAC UPDATE

At LSAC, Supporting, Encouraging and Inspiring People on Their Journey to a Legal Education, by Gisele Joachim, Director of LSAC Ambassadors



At LSAC, we continue to build and expand on the initiatives we launched last year, such as the Digital LSAT, LSAT Writing and others, as part of our commitment to supporting, encouraging and inspiring people on their journey to a legal education. Below are a few highlights of the work we are doing.

SWAPLA INSIGHTS

Gisele Joachim, Director of LSAC Ambassadors

- **Building a student body that reflects a diverse society:** LSAC's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts include pipeline-building programs to help people, including those in underserved communities, discover law. These programs include grants that encourage undergrads to explore law as a career, fee waivers, networking events, and more. [Read more on LSAC.org](#).

- **Hosting LSAC Law School Forums to help students explore and discover:** For those who might be thinking about law school, those forums offer a free opportunity to meet with representatives from 100+ law schools in 19 U.S. cities and one in Canada. Attendees can learn about the application process and financial aid, and attend exclusive workshops run by law school admissions experts and more. [2020 forum dates and locations](#).



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LSAC Law School Forums are a great way for students and law school staff to connect face-to-face.

- **Curating and sharing the most current data:** A powerful tool that we have at our fingertips is access to national data about legal education trends. LSAC is pleased to share that data — which includes numbers of LSAT takers, applicants, admits, and matriculates and breakdowns by gender, race, and ethnicity — with member law schools. See the [Data & Research section](#) of LSAC.org for all that’s available, and get updates and insights with LSAC’s monthly [Keeping Up to Data podcasts](#).
- **Helping students see legal education as a path to many career options:** Master’s and certificate programs are a growth area that now make up 15% of total law school enrollment. We are helping even more students recognize the wealth of options and opportunities that a legal education provides [with a new suite of informative pages on LSAC.org](#). These pages describe different types of law degrees and how they can be useful in many career paths. Candidates can also search for schools’ master’s and certificate programs by law-related focus area, such as environmental or health, for example, through their LSAC online accounts.
- **Supporting success for you and your students:** [LSAC Ambassadors](#) are law school admission experts who can offer educational presentations and professional consultations to law school candidates and legal education professionals. In the coming months, you’ll find LSAC Ambassadors at Texas Tech University, giving a presentation about the LSAT; at the University of Miami with a “Deciding Between Multiple Law School Offers” presentation; and at a Penn Law Outreach event, helping candidates learn how to apply to and succeed in law school, to name just a few. [Request an Ambassador visit](#).

A Message from the PLANC President

A Stroll Down Memory Lane and a Look towards the Future, by Sandy Self, J.D.



I spent my first few years as a professor and the sole pre-law advisor at Hardin-Simmons University unaware that SWAPLA or PLANC even existed. It was Dr. Mel Hailey, former SWAPLA President, former PLANC Chair, and esteemed Abilene Christian University political science professor and pre-law advisor, who suggested that I become a member. I had contacted Mel in an attempt to convince him to become involved in TUMCA, the Texas Undergraduate Moot Court Association. It didn't take long for Mel to (politely) turn me down and then to steer me in the direction of SWAPLA. Thank you, Mel.

SWAPLA INSIGHTS

*Sandy Self, J.D., Professor of Political Science and Legal Studies at Hardin-Simmons University
PLANC Chair, SWAPLA Past President*

I still remember walking into my first SWAPLA Annual Conference. I can't remember what year it was, or even where it was, but what I do remember is seeing Jerry Polinard's welcoming ear-to-ear grin as I sheepishly approached the registration table. I immediately felt at ease and by the end of the conference I knew that I had found an organization that I wanted (and needed) to join. For those of you who didn't have an opportunity to know Jerry, he retired in 2018, after over a half-century as a well-loved professor of political science at the University of Texas - Pan American, currently the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Jerry was a founding member of both SWAPLA and PLANC and served both organizations as SWAPLA President, and PLANC Chair, and in countless other ways for many years, including years of editing and publishing the PLANC Points Newsletter.

I could fill volumes listing the incredible colleagues and friends that I have come to know through SWAPLA and PLANC through the years. Suffice it to say, that I feel blessed to be a part of both organizations. The vast amount of pre-law advising resources which I have found and continue to access through conferences and fellow members, both pre-law advisors and law school admissions professionals, across the nation is invaluable. I hope that all of you are aware of the PLANC listserv, and if you have not joined, I would encourage you to do so. The conversations on this listserv continuously provide me with information and innovative ideas that assist me daily in my advising. If you haven't joined and would like to, go to <http://www.PLANC.org> and click on the "listserv" tab at the top of the page where you will find instructions and a subscription link.

I would like to conclude with my personal invitation to the 2020 PLANC Quadrennial Conference, “Recovery and Growth: Best Practices and Creative Approaches in Pre-Law,” in New Orleans, June 8 – 11. Registration is [here](#). For additional information, please visit the [PLANC website](#).

I would also encourage you to consider participating as a volunteer to assist us at the conference. Keep an eye out for an email as we get closer to the conference containing details regarding how to become a conference volunteer. Hope to see you in NOLA.

Laissez les bon temps rouler,

Sandy Self, J.D., PLANC President, Past SWAPLA President

PLANC Conference Subsidy Information

SWAPLA INSIGHTS

SWAPLA is providing subsidies to attend the PLANC Conference in New Orleans, LA, June 8-11, 2020.

Registration is now open for the [Quadrennial Pre-Law Advisors National Conference](#) (PLANC) in New Orleans this June! SWAPLA is offering a significant subsidy for those who are interested in attending. SWAPLA members are eligible for a \$1,500.00 subsidy to cover their cost of attendance.

The theme is “Recovery and Growth: Best Practices and Creative Approaches to Pre-Law,” and the conference will be from Monday June 8 to Thursday June 11, 2020, at the Intercontinental New Orleans Hotel.

This subsidy does not apply to HBCU/HACU/TBCU members who are receiving the [LSAC](#) subsidy. For those members, SWAPLA will give a subsidy of \$150.00 to cover any incidental costs not covered by LSAC.

To receive the subsidy:

1. Be sure you have joined SWAPLA for 2020 and paid your \$25 dues.
2. Email your intent to attend the conference and request for subsidy to Barbara.kirby@utdallas.edu with: name, school, email address and whether check will be made to you personally or to your institution.
3. Register for the conference and book your room at the conference hotel by **March 31, 2020**. Subsidy recipients are required to stay at the conference hotel or an overflow hotel if the conference hotel is full. Register [here](#).
4. Attend the entire conference, including the SWAPLA members meeting on Wednesday, June 10, 2020. Subsidy checks will be given at the end of the member meeting.

Please let us know if you have any questions, and we look forward to seeing you in New Orleans!

The SWAPLA Board

SWAPLA Board



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SWAPLA President



Sandy Self
SWAPLA Past President
PLANC Chair



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