

**Southern Methodist University**  
**Dedman School of Law**  
Committee on Admissions  
Admissions Policy

Accepted by Faculty Resolution, March 22, 2004

We educate students in an academically challenging environment and prepare them to become competent and ethical lawyers who will use their professional education to serve the public good. To accomplish this mission, we seek to select students who will benefit from the educational opportunity at SMU, add to their classmates' educational opportunities, and contribute to society both while at the Law School and after graduation. Therefore we select students of character and ability, with a record of commitment to rigorous work, who have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Students with these attributes enrich the educational environment and lawyers with these attributes serve the public good.

We receive many more applications from qualified candidates than we can accept, so we must make difficult choices. We carefully evaluate each complete application file. We hope to gather enough information from the application to permit a fair assessment of the qualities of each applicant.

Good character is a necessity, not a factor in the balance. If any information in an applicant's file causes concern, we may provide the applicant an opportunity to respond. If our concern remains, we do not accept the application.

The study of law at SMU is an academically rigorous undertaking. We do not admit an applicant unless we conclude that he or she is intellectually capable and academically prepared to meet the challenge. We hope to admit applicants with superior intellect and preparation who will achieve at ever higher levels, both for themselves and for the Law School. To achieve this goal, we rely on all the information in an applicant's file, including traditional academic indicators. We believe that we can increase the confidence we have in our assessment by evaluating as well: the strength of undergraduate institutions and programs; the demands of the applicant's course of study; the direction of grade trends; any postgraduate education, any work experience bearing on the ability to succeed in law school, and recommendations that give strong evidence of academic ability, commitment, and achievement.

We accept many applications largely on academic indicators. Likewise, we deny many applications on the same bases. At some point, low grades or a low Law School Admission Test score will persuade us that the applicant is not prepared for, or capable of, the work demanded of an SMU law student. While we may accept or reject many applications based substantially on traditional academic indicators, we do not decide without a review of the entire file. There are no automatic acceptances or rejections.

We also evaluate other indicators of promise as a law student and lawyer. Therefore we consider an applicant's social and economic background, hardships overcome, family educational history, work experience, special skills and talents, community service, leadership, and ethnic, racial, or geographic diversity. We consider any other characteristic evidencing an applicant's ability to benefit from the educational opportunity at SMU, to add to their classmates' educational opportunities, and to contribute to society both while at the Law School and after graduation. The Law School is committed to racial and ethnic diversity because we have concluded that it enriches the educational experience of all by bringing diversity of background and perspective to the School. In order to achieve that diversity, we seek to enroll a critical mass of students from previously under-represented racial and ethnic groups. Beyond law school, we are committed to contribute to the racial and ethnic diversity of the legal profession and of leadership in our society. Once we have concluded that an applicant is capable of succeeding at the Law School, we may also consider the relationship an applicant or applicant's family has to the Law School or the University.

The professional staff of the Office of Admissions, under the oversight of the Admissions Committee, evaluate each application individually. There are no quotas or set-asides on any basis, including race or ethnicity.

Admissions staff are happy to meet applicants and answer their questions. We do not offer personal interviews as an element in our admissions decision.