

Vanderbilt Law School Admission Interview Program

Training Manual for Alumni Interviewers

Thank you for participating in the Admission Interview Program (AIP)! Vanderbilt sets itself apart from other law schools by widely offering alumni interviews. We could not do it without your support and regularly hear positive feedback from applicants about this unique experience. Any applicant can request an interview by November 15 and interview evaluations are considered in the decision making process. Interviews are conducted nationwide and in several foreign locations by VLS alumni and admissions officers.

This document was created to provide you with the information you may need to participate as an alumni admissions interviewer on behalf of VLS.

Purpose of AIP

We have found that AIP enhances our selection process, our recruitment efforts, and alumni involvement with VLS.

* An interview provides the Admissions Office with information about the candidate's intangible and personal qualities such as maturity, curiosity, and professionalism that can contribute to the positive environment at VLS. Interview evaluations are especially helpful in choosing between candidates whose applications are equally impressive by distinguishing those who stand out in these personal dimensions. Many of the personal characteristics that facilitate a successful legal career are better measured from a conversation than a traditional paper application. *The National Law Journal* article by Kimberly K. Egan, "Everything Associates Didn't Learn In Law School", aptly describes the attributes that an interview can identify. The article is included on your portal.

*Interviews also can recruit admitted applicants because they provide them with positive and unique interactions with members of the VLS community. One reason that students choose Vanderbilt over other top law schools is the collegial and collaborative campus environment and alumni interviews can reflect this. Interviews give applicants a personal experience that they cannot obtain from the website or printed materials. Whether or not the applicant is admitted or matriculates, applicants have a positive association with VLS due to their interview.

*As an alumna/us, interviewing applicants is an easy way to maintain your involvement in the VLS community. We need your participation to provide our geographically diverse applicant pool with an ample offering of interview options and locations. We expect that you will enjoy sharing your experience and meeting aspiring attorneys from your area for your own potential professional networking.

It is important to note that the interview evaluation will ask you to assess your interaction with the candidate. We purposely do not ask you to ascertain any specific information about the applicant's candidacy for admission. We will have the formal paper application; we are looking for an evaluation of his/her interpersonal skills, which are more difficult to assess from the traditional application.

Timeline for Alumni Interviews

Please note that the admissions process is extremely time sensitive. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, as quickly as possible after the complete application is submitted. Because we want to include your comments in the review of an application, **we will hold an otherwise complete application for the interview evaluation before beginning reviewing it.** Therefore, we ask that you conduct each interview and submit the interview report in a timely manner to ensure that each application can be reviewed without delay. Delayed decisions can seriously hamper our recruitment efforts, because strong applicants may be admitted to other law schools and (incorrectly) assume that we are not interested in their application.

The general timeline for the interview program is as follows:

- 1) Interview assignments will begin as early as September 1, and we expect the number of alumni requests to increase throughout the fall until the deadline on November 15. Alumni will receive interview assignments via email from the Admissions Office (from email account lawschoolinterview@vanderbilt.edu) Interview assignments will conclude by early December. You may receive up to 5 interview assignments per year (unless you ask for more or fewer), depending upon the volume of requests for interviews in your area.
- 2) Your interview assignment will require a response. You should log onto your portal (<https://admissions.law.vanderbilt.edu/portal/alumni>) and review the applicant names under "My Pending Interview Assignments." You will click on the applicant's name and click "Accept" if you are able to conduct the interview in a timely manner or "Decline" if you would like us to assign it to another interviewer. You will receive the following information about your interviewee: name, undergraduate college, year of college graduation, and interview location request (your city for an in-person interview, or phone or Skype). **You should contact the applicant within 2 days to schedule the interview and ask for a copy of his or her resume. If possible, please arrange to conduct the interview within 2 weeks.** You should email the student at the email address provided (you can view their email address by clicking on the applicant's name in the portal).
- 3) Once the interview is scheduled, please log onto your portal, click on the applicant's name and select "Interview Scheduled." This lets our office know that the process is underway.
- 4) Before conducting the interview, you may want to familiarize yourself with current VLS news. We suggest spending a few minutes on any of these websites:
<http://law.vanderbilt.edu>

<http://law.vanderbilt.edu/news/>
<http://law.vanderbilt.edu/prospective-students/>
<http://law.vanderbilt.edu/academics/>

VLS Career Services Information:

<http://law.vanderbilt.edu/employers-cs/>

You may also want to visit the LSAC website, which applicants use for assistance in their law school application process:

<http://www.lsac.org/>

- 5) Conduct the interview as scheduled. Please choose a professional and appropriate environment and time for the interview. See below for more suggestions regarding the content of the interview.
- 6) Log onto your portal to complete the interview evaluation form. Open the form by clicking the candidate's name and clicking on "Evaluation Form." This evaluation form will be added to the interviewee's application file and read with the other admissions materials. **Because of the time sensitive nature of the admissions process, please submit this evaluation within 1 day of the interview.** The interview evaluation asks you to rate the applicant's communication skills, professionalism, maturity, intellectual curiosity, manners, and sociability, and then answer the following open ended questions:
 1. Give your general impressions of the applicant. Did you enjoy meeting him/her? Feel free to mention any noteworthy answers given, noteworthy questions asked, how engaging he/she is, etc.
 2. How might the applicant enrich the VLS community?
 3. Would you enjoy working with this applicant in a professional setting? Explain.Examples and context for your responses are very helpful! More information on evaluations can be found below.
- 7) Once your interviewee's admission decision is available, you may view it online by logging onto the portal. Please note that while most interviews will be conducted between September and January, it is possible that the interview will take place many weeks or even a few months before an admissions decision is available. We would appreciate your contacting admitted students to congratulate them and encourage them to visit campus.

Arranging and Conducting the Interview

Once you have accepted an interview assignment, **contact the applicant within 2 days to schedule the interview and ask for their resume. If your schedules permit, we ask that you conduct the interview within the next 2 weeks. If the applicant requests to meet at a later date, it is fine to schedule the interview then.** You are welcome to schedule the interview at your office or home, or a public location such

as Starbucks or Panera. Because the applicant is an aspiring lawyer, a business environment is requested. **Interviewees are expected to travel to a location that is convenient for you. (Edit: In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews conducted in the Fall 2021-2022 admissions cycle will be held virtually.)**

While you may interview regularly in a professional setting, remember that this interview should be less like a job interview and take on a more casual, conversational tone. Sample questions may include:

- What attracted you to VLS?
- Have you ever visited Vanderbilt/Nashville? Tell me about your visit.
- Why does law school appeal to you?
- What are some of your career goals?
- Of what accomplishments are you most proud?
- If you could go back in time and “redo” something in your life, what would it be?
- What has been your greatest academic/professional challenge? How did you overcome it?
- How do you handle stressful situations?
- Tell me about a time when you received constructive criticism. What did you learn/change from it?
- For recent graduates- What was your favorite class in college? What was your most significant involvement outside of classes (organized activity, job, etc.)?
- For those with professional experience- how did your current job affect your decision to apply to law school?
- What do you like to do outside of work/school?
- How do you hope to contribute to the VLS community?
- What would you like the Admissions Office to know about you?
- What questions do you have for me about my law school experience, or my professional experience?

Because we are already aware of the applicant’s academic profile, and because we do not want the applicant to infer that his/her grades and LSAT are the only important portions of the application, we would prefer that you not ask about these criteria. Similarly, you should not ask whether or not Vanderbilt is his/her first choice, or about his/her financial situation.

To highlight some ways VLS distinguishes itself from other law schools your interviewee may be considering, feel free to discuss these characteristics:

- Location- Nashville is GREAT! Highlight Nashville’s relatively low cost of living and friendly nature, Vanderbilt’s location in a desirable area of town - close to downtown but with a gorgeous traditional campus. Our students can attend SEC football games, NHL hockey games, and live music any night of the week. Nashville is a growing city and one that’s been on many top lists. Just in the past couple of years, Nashville has been ranked *#4 of US Best Performing City; 10 Hottest Destinations to Visit, Best Sports City. One of the World’s Best 20 Travel Destinations, 2nd Nicest City in America, #3 Best City for Young Professionals, The South’s Best*

Food Cities, and many more. Nashville attracts people from all over the country and the world to come visit or to move permanently.

- Size – With typically less than 200 1Ls entering the Law School every year, and approximately 600 total law students, VLS students have easy access to faculty and Career Services. Our small size also means there is less competition among classmates for jobs.
- Collegiality- We are very proud of our reputation as a “kinder, gentler law school.”
- Distinguishing characteristics of the VLS 1L curriculum- Orientation includes a weeklong, 1-hour credit introductory course, *The Life of the Law*, designed by VLS professors Tracey George and Suzanna Sherry. Our 1L curriculum now includes the *Regulatory State* class, designed by VLS professors Lisa Bressman, Ed Rubin, and Kevin Stack. Also, 1Ls may choose an elective during spring semester. None of these are typical of the first year curriculum at most other law schools.
- National presence (based on Class of 2024 profile as of 8/24/21) We intentionally targeted a smaller JD to class to enter in 2021 and going forward, 155 first-year students versus about 180 in recent years, to further enrich the personal approach to legal education for which Vanderbilt is known.
 - 155 students (three first-year sections of about 52 students)
 - 53% women, 34% minority, 23 median age
 - 31 states, Canada, and Puerto Rico represented
 - 87 undergraduate schools represented

Full profile of the Class of 2024 coming soon to: [J.D. Class Profiles and Statistics](#)

- Recent grads have chosen employment in Tennessee (19%), New York (16%), Washington D.C (about 10%), Texas (10%), Georgia, California, Florida, and Illinois (ranging from 7%-4%). This dispersion decreases competition for jobs, and helps Career Services adjust to different markets’ current hiring situations.

Answers to interviewees’ Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What are my chances of being admitted?

A1: The interview is only one of many parts of your application, and I do not have access to your entire application. Your decision will be determined after a holistic review by multiple admissions officers, and in comparison to the rest of this year’s applicant pool.

Q2: What are my chances of being offered a scholarship?

A2: All admitted students are automatically considered for merit-based scholarships, and admitted applicants whose merit-based awards do not fully meet their tuition-need may be eligible for [Access2VLS grants](#) that pay up to \$5,000 of the student’s unmet first-year tuition need. Applicants may also submit the optional Law Scholars application form to be considered for our full-tuition scholarships. In recent years, more than 80 percent of Vanderbilt Law students have received scholarship funding in varying amounts with a median award of approximately half tuition.

Q3: What are the median enrolling GPA and LSAT?

A3: For the class of 2024 the median GPA is 3.89 and the median LSAT is 169 (95th percentile). Please note that VLS does not require any minimum GPA or LSAT for admission; each application is given a holistic review.

Q4: What is the average class size?

A4: The first year class is divided into three sections of approximately 52 students each. Upper division classroom course enrollments range between five and 100 students, with most under 25 students.

Q5: What classes will I take in my first year?

A5: First-year students will take a week-long introductory course, *The Life of the Law*, during orientation in August. Semester-long 1L classes include: *Civil Procedure*, *Contracts*, *Criminal Law*, *Legal Writing I & II*, *Property*, *Regulatory State*, *Torts*, and an elective (or Constitutional Law).

Q6: What classes will I take in my second and third years?

A6: Upper-level offerings are almost entirely elective, allowing students to choose from a broad curriculum, combining courses, clinics, externships, independent work, and courses outside the law school to accomplish career goals. Students choose from over 250 elective courses during these years, and can focus in our various academic programs: Law & Business, Criminal Justice, Environmental Law, Intellectual Property, International Legal Studies, Law & Government, Litigation & Dispute Resolution, Program on Law and Innovation, and Social Justice. Students can select any of these programs (i.e., they do not need to apply, there is no enrollment maximum), and still have time in their curriculum to take classes in other areas.

Q7: How do students get involved in clinics?

A7: Students register for clinics like the register for a class. 3Ls get preference and clinics are capped at 6-8 students so generally the spots will be filled by 3Ls. If there are additional spots after 3L registration, 2Ls can register. They are all a great way to gain practical experience working with clients and closely with a faculty member. <https://law.vanderbilt.edu/academics/clinical-legal-education/index.php>

Q8: Where do VLS students live?

A8: Vanderbilt recently [broke ground](#) on its first housing dedicated to graduate students which will not be completed for a few years. Nashville offers a variety of housing options and the university is adjacent to several safe and desirable neighborhoods. Most first-year students live within a few miles of campus. Many students walk or bike to campus, and the Nashville bus system is free to Vanderbilt students. Those who drive to campus typically park in a university lot or garage that are less than a 5 minute walk into the building. All VLS students are eligible to buy a parking permit.

Q9: Where do new VLS graduates take employment?

A9: Recent graduating classes typically have taken employment across 37 states, Washington, DC, and abroad. About 21% stay in Tennessee, followed by New York (14%), Washington D.C (about 9%), and Texas, Georgia, California, Florida, and Illinois (ranging from 9%-4%). The rest have taken employment across 30 other states or abroad, or pursued additional graduate education. As a result of this broad dispersion, the Office of Career Services has longstanding familiarity with legal employers across the nation and supports students' job searches in their preferred locations

Q10: How does interview selection for On-Campus Interviews (OCI) for 2Ls work?

A10: Using the employers' hiring criteria as a guide, students submit ranked bids for on-campus interviews. Their resumes are then made available to the employers for whom they bid. If there are enough slots on the employer's interview schedule(s) to allow all bidding students to have an interview, all are given interviews. If there are not enough slots on the employer's interview schedule(s) for all bidding students to have an interview, the employer may preselect students to fill 50% of their interview slots. The remaining 50% of the slots are filled by students who submitted the highest ranked bids for that employer.

Q11: Does VLS rank its students?

A11: Vanderbilt Law School does not rank students individually in their class and there are no published cumulative percentile rankings. The only mark of distinction published is the Dean's List, which is a non-cumulative breakdown of the top 20% per semester.

Q12: What about public interest at Vanderbilt?

A12: In addition to electives and students organizations like Law Students for Social Justice, we have clinics that serve the community in both criminal and civil issues. Spring Miller is our Assistant Dean of Public Interest and provides 1:1 guidance and mentorship for students interested in pursuing PI during or after law school. We have a pro bono pledge and alternative spring breaks as well. We also have funding for students pursuing those opportunities in summer or post graduate work. There are also countless events/speakers/panels for students to attend.

Before concluding the interview, make sure you have given the applicant an opportunity to ask questions.

Refer any questions you cannot answer to the Admissions Office (lawschoolinterview@vanderbilt.edu; 615-322-6452) for follow-up.

Interview Evaluations

Interview evaluations are most helpful when they contain information that is not likely already in the admissions file, and when they tell something **specific** about the applicant's personality. Again, we want you to comment on your interaction with the applicant instead of information from his/her resume.

Example of helpful evaluation answers:

1. Give your general impressions of the applicant and interview. Did you enjoy meeting the applicant?

Sarah aced the interview and I definitely enjoyed meeting her – we talked longer than I had scheduled and the time flew by. Overall, I was most impressed by her professional demeanor. She was professional and prompt in our communications, dressed appropriately, on time for our meeting, and had good prepared questions. If I had to describe her in one word it would be “polished”. I felt like I was interviewing her for a job instead of law school. She had looked me up on my firm’s website and had done her research about Vanderbilt. I think she will do well in her job interviews at OCI.

2. How might the applicant enrich the VLS community?

Sarah has been working for a respected Chicago firm and had thoughtful observations on the projects she has done. This has solidified her interest in law and her real world experience will add to classroom discussion. Also, her brother is an attorney so I suspect she has a realistic sense of law school. She seems to be very social with the associates at her firm (she mentioned playing on the firm’s softball team), and I suspect she’ll add to the collegiality of VLS. Sarah explained that VLS’s reputation as a less-competitive law school is a draw for her; apparently many long nights around her firm’s conference table have resulted in an appreciation for working cooperatively with others.

3. Would you enjoy working with the applicant in a professional setting?

Absolutely. Sarah strikes me as very organized and I suspect she can be counted on to hold up her end of a project. Her friendly nature is a big plus as well.

Example of not-so-helpful evaluation answers:

1. Give your general impressions of the applicant and interview. Did you enjoy meeting the applicant?

Sarah passed the interview and I definitely enjoyed meeting her. She asked me some great questions about VLS and was easy to talk to.

2. How might the applicant enrich the VLS community?

Sarah has an impressive resume of her professional and academic experiences- she works at a firm and has a 3.7 gpa from Northwestern! I think she will really add to VLS.

3. Would you enjoy working with the applicant in a professional setting?

Yes

General Expectations and Guidelines for Alumni Interviewers

- Check emails regularly and respond appropriately (by logging onto the portal, viewing the interview assignment, contacting the interviewee to arrange the interview, and submitting evaluation).
- Always represent VLS positively.
- Do not make negative remarks about other universities.

- Treat each applicant with respect and sensitivity (remember, applying to law school is stressful! Try to meet them where they are – they don't have the experience and knowledge that you do now).
- Treat each interview with confidence; even the fact that someone has applied to VLS is considered confidential.
- Like a job interview, you should not inquire or comment on an applicant's race, religion, marital status, age, disabilities, gender, country of origin, sexual orientation, or ethnic background.
- Follow up with admitted students to congratulate them and encourage them to visit campus.
- When possible, attend local VLS sponsored post admission/recruitment events.
- It is generally a good idea to avoid interviewing relatives, friends, or employees. If you do interview someone you already know, you must disclose your relationship in the evaluation form.
- Lastly, please do not comment on an applicant's likelihood of admission. Whether the student appears to be a competitive applicant or not, please remember that each applicant is given a thorough and holistic review of academic and nonacademic credentials. Not all relevant information about the applicant's candidacy will be available to you.

Thank you for volunteering your time to help VLS recruit next year's 1L class! We hope you enjoy meeting our applicants and appreciate your feedback. We could not offer this valuable program without your support! For any questions or comments, please contact VLS admissions at lawschoolinterview@vanderbilt.edu or 615-322-6452.