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Law School Applications on the Rise

As of Dec. 1, the number of law school applicants was up by 12 percent while the number of applications was up by 15 percent.

By Angela Morris | December 07, 2017



<http://images.law.com/contrib/content/uploads/sites/292/2017/12/hands.jpg>

Just in time for the new year, law schools have cause to celebrate.

As of Dec. 1, the number of law school applicants was up by 12 percent to 16,784, compared with this time last year, while the number of applications was up by 15 percent to 93,932, [according to the Law School Admission Council \(https://lsac.org/lsacresources/data/three-year-volume\)](https://lsac.org/lsacresources/data/three-year-volume).

Granted, it might be too early in the application season to declare a definitive upward trend for the next academic year, since around this time last year, only 27 percent of the total applicants had submitted their applications.

Still, the numbers are in line with the hope law schools expressed earlier this year after LSAC data showed that in September, 37,100 people took the LSAT, a 10.7 percent increase over September 2016. And in June, 27,600 people took the LSAT, a 19.8 percent jump compared with June 2016.

As of Dec. 1, the number of people who registered to take the LSAT this month was up by 26 percent compared with last year, said Kellye Testy, president and CEO of the LSAC.

"I think it's very promising. We were pleased to see the increase in people taking the LSAT has now translated into an increase in people applying to school," Testy said. "Our member schools are certainly happy to see it: They had many years of it going down or staying flat, so they are pleased to see the renewed interest."

An increase in applicant numbers would be a welcome departure from recent history. The number of applicants has plummeted by at least 33 percent over the last 10 years from 84,000 in 2007 to 56,500 in 2016. More applicants could translate into more top-performing students for law schools to recruit.

Testy said the current political climate in the United States is motivating students, whether they support President Donald Trump (<https://www.law.com/nationallawjournal/sites/nationallawjournal/2017/08/31/lSAT-takers-cite-trump-presidency-as-reason-to-become-a-lawyer/?back=law>) or oppose him, to consider the law as a career. Also, historically speaking, it's a normal cycle for the numbers of applicants to increase and decrease.

"We had predicted we were at the bottom, and we would tick up. We are seeing that, and I'm going to hope it will continue to move that direction," Testy said.

But Jeff Thomas, executive director of prelaw programs at Kaplan Test Prep, who watches these trends closely, said it's still too early to tell whether applications will level out as the application season continues through next year. He pointed out that LSAT administration this fall came one week early, which could help applicants turn in their applications seven to 10 days early, leading to an artificial increase. As the season moves on, the numbers could normalize. But if they increase steadily instead, Thomas said it could mean more competition among applicants.

"Just because applications go up doesn't mean law schools will increase the size of their classes. In fact, I suspect it will not be the case," he said.

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