Law School Admission Council
Prelaw Undergraduate Scholars Program (PLUS)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
Introduction

The Prelaw Undergraduate Scholars Program (hereinafter PLUS) is designed to increase the number of lawyers from underrepresented groups by introducing first- and second-year college students to the skills important for success in law school. This Request for Proposal (RFP) sets out the history of the program, the program requirements, optional components, evaluation process, and other factors pertinent to law schools submitting proposals for PLUS grants. The program is funded by the Diversity Initiatives Fund of the Law School Admission Council (LSAC), and only LSAC-member law schools are eligible to submit proposals.

I. History and Objectives

LSAC is committed to supporting initiatives for ensuring diversity in the legal profession. Among other goals, LSAC devotes substantial resources to increase opportunities for and encourage students from diverse backgrounds including students of color to consider careers in law and prepare them for admission to law school. To further that commitment, LSAC’s Board of Trustees has authorized PLUS grants from LSAC’s Diversity Initiatives Fund. Grants for new programs may be awarded for up to $100,000 per year up to a maximum of three years ($300,000 total) per program. The programs must be targeted to students from diverse backgrounds that are underrepresented in the legal profession. Proposals must describe the groups being targeted in their proposal, but enrollment is not restricted only to the targeted groups.

LSAC invites member law schools to submit program proposals for grants designed to encourage students from groups underrepresented in the legal profession to become lawyers and to provide them with the skill enhancement and other forms of assistance that will strengthen their preparation for law school. Successful programs with similar goals have been implemented at several member law schools. Between 2002 and 2019, LSAC has funded similar programs at 27 law schools. Selected students were admitted into a summer residential program where they were introduced to fundamental legal skills, including writing and analysis of complex materials from courses taught collaboratively by law professors and college professors. Some programs also included one-on-one guidance from qualified counselors and placement with mentors to assist in their development. The LSAC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee encourages schools to be creative in providing a rigorous, skills-oriented curriculum. Prelaw Undergraduate Scholars Programs have received public recognition in many states and local communities.

II. Program Requirements

The following are minimum requirements for proposals submitted to PLUS:

A. The programs must be targeted to students in the first two years of college, including community and two-year colleges, from diverse backgrounds that are underrepresented in the legal profession. Programs must be targeted to but not limited to students from diverse backgrounds.

B. The duration of the program should not be less than four (4) consecutive weeks. The program length should be directly related to the resources that the school intends to devote to the program. Programs must have the support of the law school faculty and reflect the involvement of all relevant units within the law school—including but not limited to admission, academic affairs, career services, and academic support.

C. Law school professors and administrators are urged to collaborate with other colleges, law schools, and bar foundations in the targeted region, to the extent that it is geographically feasible. The committee will look more favorably on programs that propose a collaborative effort between one or more law school, college, and/or educational foundation.
D. The curriculum is the keystone of the program. The curriculum must focus on the development of fundamental skills such as reading comprehension, and logical and analytical reasoning, and must include a comprehensive writing component. LSAC will prepare and require an LSAT introduction component that must be included in the curriculum. The committee is looking for creative approaches to skill development, not commercial LSAT preparation. Information about the Khan LSAT preparation site will be provided by LSAC. The DEI Committee acknowledges that the skills training offered may include substantive law courses or courses from other disciplines in which these skills are developed. All PLUS materials that program developers create must be made available upon request to any LSAC member law school. A brief summary of the curriculum from previous grant recipients is attached to this RFP. Courses should be designed to develop critical reading, analytical and logical reasoning, problem solving, advocacy, and listening skills. In addition, time management and collaborative learning should also be emphasized.

E. The program should have an informational component that includes exposure to the legal profession. This component may take the form of guest lectures by prominent members of the legal profession, discussions about the rigors of law school, and an overview of the application process, including the importance of undergraduate grades, the role of the LSAT, drafting personal statements, selecting law schools, and the significance of personal ethics.

F. The program must include a neutral and objective evaluation process, including testing, evaluations, and feedback to students at frequent intervals. These evaluations should reflect the students’ progress or lack of progress in the program. The evaluation must also include student evaluations for each course and the instructors who taught in the program. The professors and administrators must also complete objective evaluations regarding the effectiveness of all aspects of the programs, such as whether the goals of each particular component were met and whether changes may be required to effectively satisfy unmet goals.

G. Selected schools must agree to collect, retain, and share data that LSAC may use to monitor the program and measure the success of student participants during and after completion of the program. Grant recipients must agree to cooperate with LSAC in following the progress of program participants including, but not limited to, providing information such as school and home addresses, school records, lists of successful and unsuccessful participants, and the necessary releases from the participants for requesting transcripts from the colleges they attend. The recipient schools also must cooperate with LSAC in administering and evaluating diagnostic instruments developed by LSAC. Recipient schools also must agree to share and retain data for use by LSAC, consulting with LSAC about the design of the database for retaining the requested information. Cooperation with the evaluation process of LSAC is very important, and proposals must identify the person(s) responsible for responding to data requests.

H. PLUS materials, pamphlets, brochures, and the like prepared to market, advertise, and otherwise promote PLUS must meet LSAC program marketing guidelines that will be furnished to all grant recipients. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of the grant.

I. The proposed program must include a plan for sustainability after the LSAC grant expires. The plan should address the long-term funding and the institutional support for the program outcomes.

J. Many students rely on summer earnings to offset school-year expenses. Based on an analysis of previous programs, including student costs, LSAC requires that each program provide a stipend of $1,000 per student in the program. Stipends may be paid in installments and be conditioned on program performance of each participant.
III. Optional Components

The additional suggestions offered below are not considered minimum requirements, but they may be included in the proposals:

A. The recipient school may consider some type of continuing relationship with students who complete the program, including—but not limited to—counseling and assistance in achieving their educational and career goals. This continuing relationship may be useful for program development and fundraising purposes.

B. Subject to the rules and regulations of the college that the student attends, the program may offer participants academic credit for completion of courses.

IV. Evaluation Details

A. Your proposal must include a plan for conducting an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program’s implementation and achievement of outcomes. These findings must be communicated to LSAC. Your application for funding (proposal) should contain an evaluation plan with the following information:

1. Criteria for evaluation (based on program objectives)
2. Methods of evaluation (sources, techniques, analysis)
3. Proposed timetable for conducting and completing the evaluations
4. Plan for communicating findings

B. The evaluation of program implementation should address the degree to which the program has been consistent with the program plan described in the proposal, and provide feedback about the quality and effectiveness of all program components. Feedback gathered during the program should be used to improve the program. Changes made as a result of this implementation evaluation should be reflected in the final report. Major deviations from the approved proposal should be cleared by LSAC before being implemented. In addition to asking students to complete evaluations of courses and instructors, other methods for evaluating program implementation might include (but not be limited to):

1. Feedback from guest speakers and hosts from field experiences
2. Daily informal feedback from participants
3. Regular staff meetings
4. Observations by program director and/or staff

C. Each PLUS must also conduct an evaluation of program outcomes. LSAC has provided some required outcomes for every PLUS but expects that each program will develop additional outcomes specific to its program. For example, one LSAC outcome is that programs will target students from racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in the legal profession. However, your program may have an additional goal of recruiting such students from several partner institutions. In that case, you would want to evaluate both the PLUS outcome and your own.

In addition to required data collection and record keeping (see Section V), programs may also consider the following methods for evaluating outcomes:

1. Student assessments
2. Course grades
3. Course assignments
4. Course exams
5. Postsession surveys
6. Capstone activities (e.g., oral argument)
7. Program specific surveys
8. Classroom observations
9. Feedback from guest speakers, classroom instructors, participants, etc.

It is your school’s responsibility to present findings and insights from both the implementation of the program and the outcomes (all required evaluations) in your final report. Even though many schools exempt PLUSs from Internal Review Board (IRB) review (because most, if not all students attending PLUSs are not actual students of the institution), LSAC does require that your program be vetted and approved by your Internal Review Board, if any, or that IRB approval be pending before you receive a grant.

V. Data Collection and Record-Keeping Obligations *(required)*

A. Administering and collecting consent and/or release forms
B. Registering all participants as required by LSAC
C. Complying with all deadlines, including (but not limited to) program reports
D. Providing participants with a certificate of PLUS completion
E. Administering and reporting results for all measures developed for the cross-program evaluation
F. Cooperating with LSAC to implement other methods designed to evaluate the PLUS objectives, such as site visits or diagnostic tools
G. Assisting LSAC with tracking PLUS alumni (for a minimum of three years post-program)
H. Submitting a final report that includes the following required components:

1. Table of Contents
2. Executive Summary
3. Final budget (using the LSAC template)
4. Aggregate Applicant data
   a. Number of completed applications
   b. Average GPA
   c. Undergraduate institution list
   d. Home state (from permanent address)
   e. Race/ethnicity
   f. Gender
5. Individual participant information (using template provided by LSAC)
   a. Name *(first, middle, last)*
   b. GPA *(at the time of application; any subsequent reporting of GPA)*
   c. Contact information *(address, phone, email, social media contacts)*
   d. Undergraduate institution for all applicants
   e. Gender
   f. Race/ethnicity
   g. Year in school *(at the time of application)*
   h. Anticipated month and year of graduation
   i. Undergraduate major
   j. Additional information about overcoming challenges *(besides race/ethnicity)*
6. Program weekly schedule with courses, sessions, times.
7. Course syllabi that lists instructor, objectives, materials, assignments, assessments.
8. Evaluation section, including a narrative describing how the program has achieved the stated goals/objectives (e.g., explain which courses/sessions cover particular legal skills and how student achievement in the course was measured).
9. Copy of recruitment materials and application
10. Copies of evaluation instruments for students and faculty
VI. Instructions for Preparing the Proposal

Detailed proposals should include, but not be limited to, the following:

A. A detailed description of the goals and objectives of the program including the types of students the program will attract and how the students will be identified, recruited, and selected (applicants are encouraged to recruit students from diverse ethnic backgrounds for participation in the program, with special consideration given to those applicants who are PLUS registrants); the length of the program; the skills emphasized in the program; and the evaluative criteria for the program as well as for the students.

B. A detailed description of the background and experience of administrators and instructors who will administer and/or participate in the program, along with their resumes.

C. A comprehensive itemized budget consisting of expenses for operating the program (except in exceptional circumstances that must be specified with particularity, LSAC does not pay indirect costs, costs for purchasing equipment whose useful life would extend beyond the duration of the program, or salaries of law school employees).

D. Identification of other sources of funds that the law school will have access to and intends to allocate and expend for completion of the program. (An institutional commitment demonstrated by the allocation of funds to support the program will be viewed favorably in the selection process. Additionally, proposals that address plans for long-term funding of programs from sources other than LSAC are encouraged.) Demonstrated ability and capacity to accomplish the goals described in the proposal.

E. For schools seeking funds to enhance or expand existing programs, the proposal must include an explanation of how the additional funds from LSAC will enhance the existing programs and why current institutional resources will not cover those enhancements or expansions.

F. Many universities require that grants of this type be administered by a centralized grant office. Programs funded by LSAC are between the member law school recipient and LSAC. Communications from grant or foundation offices of universities will be referred to the law school contact. No portion of this grant may be used as overhead to fund university grant or foundation offices.

VII. Format of Proposals and Deadlines

Each applicant should submit five hard copies and a thumb drive in Microsoft Word format. Proposals must be mailed or delivered in a manner that will ensure arrival at the address below on or before September 16, 2019.

Diversity Initiatives  
Law School Admission Council 662  
Penn Street, PO Box 40  
Newtown PA 18940

It is requested, but not required, that interested schools submit a notice of intent on or August 1, 2019.

LSAC intends to review proposals and notify applicants of awards no later than November 15, 2019.

A mandatory meeting of program directors will be held on January 10, 2020.

If you have any questions about the proposal guidelines or the deadlines, please contact: Kent D. Lollis at the Law School Admission Council, 215.968.1227 or klollis@LSAC.org.
VIII. Reservations

LSAC reserves the right not to make grants under this program, or to make grants whose cumulative dollar amount is less than the total amount allocated by the Board of Trustees to the PLUS program.

IX. Contractual Agreement

Each grant recipient school will be required to enter into a contractual agreement with LSAC. Failure to comply with the covenants in the agreement may result in financial penalties or termination of the grant. Grants are renewed on an annual basis for up to three years subject to compliance with contractual terms and program requirements.