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Admissions statistics promise great things for the Class of 2006

As of July, 98,461 people had applied to attend U.S. law schools for fall 2003, the largest number since 1991. This year is well on its way to setting an all-time record, according to the Law School Admission Council, which has been recording admissions statistics since 1948.

The explosion in applications has been pretty amazing. Nationally, applicants have gone up 29 percent in the last two years, and it’s showing no signs of stopping,” said LSAC spokesman Edward Haggerty. Not only are more people applying, Haggerty said, but they’re also applying to more schools. While the number of applicants increased 29 percent since 2001, the number of applications has gone up more than 47 percent.

UB Law School is among the beneficiaries. Applicants are lining up to be admitted into UB — and that is nothing but good news as the school continues to see an improvement in the quality of its entering classes.

Highlights among the Class of 2006: One member scored a stellar 171 on the LSAT, which has a top score of 180; one student arrives with a perfect undergraduate grade point average of 4.0; 14 students already have an advanced degree; and the students’ median undergraduate GPA is 3.46, up from 3.37 a year ago.

Lillie V. Wiley-Upshaw, the Law School’s associate dean and director of admissions and financial aid, says the school received just short of 1,800 applications for admission to this year’s entering class — a substantial 22 percent increase from the previous year.

As a result, the school was able to become more selective, admitting just 25 percent of applicants, compared with the previous years 36 percent, on target for an entering class of 240 students. Wiley-Upshaw says it is a simple numbers equation: With a larger crop of applicants, the school can afford to be choosier about whom it admits, and thus the overall quality of the entering class gets better. About half of those who are offered admission actually enroll.

She attributes the increase in applicants in part to UB Law School’s increased presence at recruitment events sponsored by the Law School Admissions Council — forums in such far-flung places as Washington, D.C., California,
Texas, Florida, New York City, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Canada. “We always get applicants from places where we travel,” Wiley-Upshaw says. “Certainly it is very beneficial to have students from different regions. It adds a different flavor to the Law School community.”

As a result of that recruiting, 29 percent of the applicants were from outside New York State or were international students. A significant number of those were Canadians – “which definitely makes sense,” Wiley-Upshaw says, “because we are so close to the border.” Others hail from Korea, Taiwan and Italy.

In June, the Law School hosted a Career Perspective Program. Its purpose was to provide prospective law students with a realistic view of life as an attorney. Over a hundred prospective law students attended a keynote address entitled “A Profession for All Reasons” delivered by U.S. Magistrate Judge Leslie Foschio. According to one participant, the judge was “funny, informative and touching – a perfect choice.” Another commented, “Exceptional overview of life as an attorney and the impact one can make on another’s life.”

Wiley-Upshaw says her office plans a formal survey of entering students in the fall to pin down why they chose UB Law School. But anecdotal evidence, she says, points to three overriding factors: affordability, quality and enthusiastic support from alumni.

“Recruitment efforts made by our alumni – especially the young members of the GOLa Group – have been tremendous this year,” she says.

“Several alumni participated in our Open House events and made telephone calls to our accepted students, encouraging them to enroll. It truly makes a difference.”

Sara L. Valencia ‘06, left, and Jeong Hon Lee ‘06

Dean Olsen praises Supreme Court’s admissions ruling

Nils Olsen, the dean of the University at Buffalo Law School, the only law school in the State University of New York system, praised the Supreme Court’s affirmation of the University of Michigan Law School admissions policy, and said the ruling supports the “mission of inclusion” that is central to the ideals of a public law school.

“As New York State’s public law school, it’s appropriate that we reflect the diversity of New York State,” said Olsen, who has served as dean since 1998.

“It is our mission to provide access for all qualified applicants who might not otherwise be able to study law in New York State,” he added. “We’re extremely happy with the Supreme Court’s decision.”

Olsen said he has seen firsthand the positive effects of diversity in the Law School’s classrooms.

“You want to offer students the best learning environment possible,” he said. “When you enroll people with a variety of life experiences and backgrounds you give students the opportunity to experience different perspectives and ideas and put them in context in their personal and professional lives.”

According to Olsen, the UB Law School admits about 240 new students each year. The school’s admission committee reviews each applicant individually, and considers a variety of factors when offering admission.