

## Supporting Your Loved One in Law School Orientation Fall 2024

### Important Dates

Academic and legislative calendars are at this link:

<https://lawschool.unm.edu/academics/calendars/index.html>

- **Orientation** (mandatory for all incoming students) August 14 through 16<sup>th</sup>.
- **First day of class** August 19
- **Midterms** October 7 & 8
- **Fall break (no classes)** October 10 & 11
- **Thanksgiving Vacation (no classes)** November 28 & 29
- **Last day of classes** November 27
- **Reading period** December 2 & 3
- **Final exams** December 4 through 13
- **Winter break December** 16 through January 14, 2025
- **Spring semester first day of classes** January 15, 2025

### Law School is hard and a lot of work

Your student is very accomplished in being accepted to law school! In their profession, lawyers must be able to evaluate legal problems, research and formulate solutions, negotiate, counsel and communicate with clients. Some will run their own business. Others will work for a firm or in government. Others will even never practice law. With that said, all law students must learn these skills and more while in school.

#### Law School teaches a different language

A short section of a case your student will read for class is attached. Notice the style of writing. Older cases are written in a particular way with a whole new vocabulary. What is an Appellant? What is a holding? What is a dissent?

#### Reading volume is high

For every hour of class time students are expected to spend at least an hour reading to prepare and study. Hundreds of pages of reading will be assigned each week.

#### A lot of time is spent in class

Law school is almost like a full-time job. Students will be in class from about 9:00 to 3:00 every day.

#### Not everyone gets an A anymore

Your student likely earned A's throughout their undergraduate career. Some law school classes are graded on a curve. This means your student might not be at the top of the class

anymore. **THIS IS OKAY!** Your student is high achieving, intelligent and competent. The vast majority of graduating students are employed in jobs they love and will make a good living. Encourage them. Remind them they are not defined by their academic record alone. They will help others and make amazing contributions to their communities.

#### The end of school three years from now is not the end – Bar Exam

After graduating from law school students must take the bar exam in order to be licensed to practice law. For information about the bar exam in New Mexico you can go to this link: <https://nmexam.org/>

Most students graduate in May of their third year and then immediately start studying for the bar which is administered nation wide twice a year on the last Tuesday and Wednesday of February and July. Following the exam, 4 to 6 weeks go by before the exams are graded and the scores released. This means a May graduate will not be licensed and begin practicing law until mid-September.

### **Law School can be emotionally challenging -What you can do**

#### Communicate

Ask your student about their experience. Listen. Your student may experience many different emotions: joy, the thrill of intellectual challenge, stress around assignments and exams, self-doubt (especially imposter syndrome), mental and emotional fatigue.

#### Support

##### Be understanding, open and patient

The work load and stress may cause your loved one to feel like they've changed. Know that they are the same lovable person and that this experience can be intense and impact anyone in this way.

Invite your student to family events but let them know it is okay if they are not able to attend. When they say they have to study or are busy graciously communicate your understanding.

##### Do some life hacks

- Cook a meal or make some snacks and drop it by
- Buy healthy groceries and drop them by
- Offer to do laundry
- Offer to do light housekeeping chores
- Take the car for an oil change
- Fill the car with gas
- Babysit the kids or pets for some alone time

- Give a gift certificate for massage
- Encourage self care

#### Mental health

UNM Main campus has counseling through Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) <https://shac.unm.edu/>

The State Bar of New Mexico offers help through the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program and through a private provider, The Solutions Group

#### Physical health

Encourage your student to get enough sleep and eat healthy regular meals. It is good to exercise even if it is just walking. There is a beautiful golf course right behind the law school with a well maintained walking path. Main campus recreation services has equipment rentals. There is an Olympic sized pool and fully loaded work out room on main campus as well.

### **ABCs of Law School**

Bar Exam – the required test to obtain a license to practice law. A bar exam is administered in all 50 states. 39 states have joined the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) group which means all takers in those jurisdictions can license in to any of the other UBE jurisdictions if the minimum score is met. New Mexico is a UBE state. <https://ncbex.org/>

Clinic – all students are required to take clinic in their third year of law school. Students practice law with real cases and clients under the supervision of a licensed attorney professor.

Cold Calling – professors use the Socratic method to teach many of the first-year classes. This means a student prepares for class by reading the assignment. Then in class, any student can be called on to discuss components of the case out loud with the professor.

ELA – Elements of Legal Argumentation is a first year required class that teaches students the skill of legal analysis, research and writing.

Hypos – hypotheticals are a set of facts meant to get the student thinking about both sides of an issue. A law school exam is really a big hypo or series of hypos in a doctrinal subject area.

LAB – this is an experiential course meant to introduce students to the profession, help them develop their professional identity and gain practical skills.

MPRE – Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam is a required national test on the topic of legal ethics. It can be taken while in law school.