



The University of Tennessee College of Law

Dr. Karen R. Britton
Director, Admissions and Financial Aid
Director, The Bettye B. Lewis Career Center
britton@utk.edu
www.law.utk.edu

1. What do you enjoy most about your job?

I love the way my job fits together. UT places the core student service units of admissions, financial aid, and career planning under one administrative umbrella so we provide a continuum of services to people from prospective students to alumni. This structure facilitates clear communication and solid advising to prospective students, who are rightfully concerned about the value and cost of their legal education and the likely return on their investment in post-graduate employment as they choose their law school. The opportunity to think strategically and lead initiatives across these key areas is exciting and rewarding. Prospective students may not know how to connect these dots, or recognize all the important questions to ask of law school personnel, and our structure facilitates this important dialogue.

2. What do you like most about your law school?

I would say its culture and its atmosphere. The way students, faculty and staff smile and speak in the hall, the fact that we are generally working cooperatively rather than competitively, the fast pace, our beautiful building and campus in the springtime, and the Volunteer school spirit that is pervasive on campus and even the law school.

3. Is there any advice you would give pre-law advisors as they are working with students on the application process for your law school?

Encourage students to take responsibility for their own career development. Begin the career exploration process before they decide law school is right for them. Go to a law school that interests them as a college sophomore or junior, interview a career services professional, and come away with a list of web resources. Begin to read about careers and job roles in which law trained individuals are valued. Law students often think they have three years to figure out what they want to do with their law degree, when in reality they need to be proactive in researching careers, seeking opportunities to intern or shadow employers, and identifying the professional roles for which they are well suited. The opportunities for law students to find their first post-graduate job just by participating in on-campus interviews in law school are waning. Job interviews can be a scarce resource as the national job market continues to fluctuate. Employers expect students they select to interview to articulate the reasons the student is well suited for their workplace and to communicate how they will add value to it. First-year law students are busy and may not have time or energy to engage in this type of thoughtful exploration and self-analysis while they are studying torts and preparing for exams. They can begin this process as part of their preparation for admission to law school.

4. What are some of the unique opportunities students will find at your law school?

I will mention four areas today. First, UT Law has long been a national leader in clinical education and our clinics grow in number and scope each year. The development of practical lawyering skills thrives in a setting where the experiential learning opportunities are many and varied and it is great to see students understand where their skills and interests coincide. Second, we recognize that it is impossible for law students to “try out” all the lawyer roles through summer jobs or internships that will lead to “career clarity” and the ability to identify the job for which they are best suited. Through close connections with employers in our mentoring programs, working side by side with lawyers in our pro bono programs, and learning from lawyers through our varied Career Center events, UT students get invaluable exposure and context for their decision-making. Third, UT is an amazingly diverse student body, particularly for a public law school located in East Tennessee. Students of color make up 25% of our student body and these students are making a difference in leadership and direction of the College and are thriving here. All three members of our National Moot Court Team, which made the “sweet sixteen” this year, also bring diversity to the College. Finally, while perhaps not that unique, it is great for students who are considering careers in business or government to have access to advanced degree programs and career advising in our other colleges, such as the College of Business. Being part of a large flagship university with over 6,000 other graduate and professional students on campus offers opportunity, and attending a law school of around 450 students gives the intimate environment that fosters close relationships with members of the law school community that students value.

5. Is there anything you would like to leave pre-law advisors with as a final comment?

As I read applications for admission this winter, I noticed that a large number of our applicants were referred by pre-law advisors. I value my collaboration with UT’s pre-law advisor here in Knoxville, Catherine Anderson Preston, and my relationships with countless other pre-law advisors in the state, region, and country who I consider colleagues and friends. I encourage pre-law advisors to reach out to admissions professionals. We will come to your campuses to meet with students, share webinars with you, set up video chats between our students and your prospects, and generally serve as resources to you and your students. UT’s Student Ambassadors group began an “alumni reach back” initiative this semester and they will be inviting many of you to connect with us through currently enrolled students who are alumni of your institutions. I encourage you to take us up on this offer and learn more about UT.