Nature of Work:

The legal system affects nearly every aspect of our society, from buying a home to crossing the street. Lawyers form the backbone of this vital system, linking it to society in numerous ways.

Professional Training:

The required college and law school education usually takes 7 years of full-time study after high school—4 years of undergraduate study, followed by 3 years of law school. Law school applicants must have a bachelor's degree to qualify for admission.

Preparation:

Although there is no recommended "pre-law" major, prospective lawyers should develop proficiency in writing and speaking, reading, researching, analyzing, and thinking logically—skills needed to succeed both in law school and in the profession. Regardless of major, a multidisciplinary background is recommended. Courses in English, foreign languages, public speaking, government, philosophy, history, economics, mathematics, and computer science, among others, are useful. The department of History and Philosophy provides the perfect multidisciplinary background, offering minors in both Philosophy and Legal Studies, both being strong compliments to the majors mentioned below. Both of these minors will help students develop and sharpen the skills that they will need for success in law school.

Acceptance into law school is based on a variety of factors. These include undergraduate academic performance, scores on the Law School Admission test (LSAT), and participation in governance of student organizations that demonstrates both student leadership and responsible citizenship.

Job Outlook:

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "[e]mployment of lawyers is projected to grow 6 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations" (see www.bls.gov). Growth in the population and in the level of business activity is expected to create more legal transactions, civil disputes, and criminal cases. However, the BLS notes, "competition for jobs should continue to be strong because more students are graduating from law school each year than there are jobs available." Graduates with superior academic records from highly regarded law schools will have the best job opportunities. Additionally, the BLS reports that willingness to relocate or take on a temporary position may be an advantage in getting a job, but "to be licensed in another state, a lawyer may have to take an additional state bar examination." (See www.bls.gov)

Earnings:

In their May 2016 salary survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the median annual wage for lawyers as $118,160; Judges, magistrate judges and magistrates as $115,460; and arbitrators, mediators and conciliators as $59,770. (See www.bls.gov)

Law school applicants must have a bachelor's degree to qualify for admission. Based on the profile of the 2015 entering class at the University of Washington School of Law, the median grade-point average was a 3.65 or better, along with a median LSAT score of 164 (90th percentile).