Quality of Law Applicants Continues To Rise

The number of applicants for admission to the University of Michigan Law School has exceeded the 4,000 mark for the third straight year, and student academic qualifications based on test scores and college grades are higher than ever.

The number of women applicants is also on the rise, accounting for nearly 18 per cent of the total number of applicants in 1973, according to a report by Jane Waterson, the Law School’s assistant dean and admissions officer.

Miss Waterson says the school received 4,496 first-year applications in 1973, which represents a slight decline from the 1972 figure of 4,915, the highest in the school’s history. Figures for previous years show 4,786 first-year applicants in 1971, 3,740 in 1970, and 2,810 in 1969.

“Although the number of applications appears to be leveling off after last year’s record total, the general quality of the applicants has gone up,” says Miss Waterson, who notes that this also appears to be the trend at other law schools.

Her report reveals a median undergraduate grade point average of 3.57 (out of a possible 4.00) for the current first-year class, and a median score of 690 (out of a possible 800) on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT).

Both these figures are higher than in previous years. For the 1972 first-year class the median undergraduate grade point average was 3.46 while the figure was 3.37 in 1971 and in 1970. The median LSAT score was 682 last year, 659 in 1971, and 648 in 1970.

Miss Waterson’s report shows that 807 women applied for admission in 1973 out of a total of 4,496 first-year applicants. A current first-year enrollment of 374 includes 83 women, while 58 women enrolled in 1972.

Miss Waterson notes that the Law School now seeks an entering class of 360 to 370 students. First-year enrollment figures were higher in previous years, she says, because of the school’s over-enrollment in anticipation of high draft calls.

Here are some other statistics in the report:

About 58 per cent of the current first-year student body are Michigan residents, compared to 51 per cent last year and 55 per cent in 1971. The remainder of current first-year students come from 33 states and the District of Columbia, with the highest out-of-state representation from Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New York.

The current first-year class has 35 minority students, including blacks and Spanish surname students. About 16 per cent of the first-year class are listed as having some graduate school experience before entering law school, including 40 students with master’s degrees and two with doctorates. A total of 146 first-year students, according to Miss Waterson, “have been out of undergraduate school for at least one year doing something other than graduate work.”

Allan Smith, Former Dean, Returns To Law Teaching

Allan F. Smith, who served as University of Michigan law dean from 1960-65 and as the U-M’s vice-president for academic affairs since 1963, will step down from the vice-presidency at the end of the current school year to resume teaching at the Law School.

Dr. Smith, 62, said: “I have spent 14 years at administrative effort in the Law School and in the central administration, and I want to go back to teaching, which I like, and to my profession. I think I can be of greater use to the Law School if I move now rather than later.”

Smith’s request to be relieved of administrative duties was approved by the University Regents in October. University by-laws require executive officers and deans to retire from administrative posts at age 65, but they may return to professorial duties.

U-M President Robben W. Fleming commented: “Allan Smith is a superb vice-president for academic affairs. He has contributed immeasurably to the quality of this University, and it is hard to imagine anyone else in his position. Nevertheless, his desire for a less arduous assignment is understandable, and we bow to his wishes out of deep respect for his long and distinguished service.”

A U-M faculty member since 1947, Dr. Smith was appointed to his present position to succeed Roger W. Heyns, who moved to the University of California as chancellor of the Berkeley campus. Heyns now is president of the American Council on Education in Washington.

Smith, who is widely known as a scholar, administrator, and author and who has gained a reputation as a superior classroom teacher, reflected: “It has been fun to watch a very great university in all of its operations. I am continuously struck by the strength of our deans and other academic unit heads. They and the faculty have given this University its international distinction.”

Smith was born Dec. 19, 1911, in Belgrade, Neb., and was graduated from Nebraska State Teachers College, now Kearney State College, in 1933. He received a bachelor of laws degree from the University of Nebraska in 1940. He also has two degrees from the U-M—a Master of Laws in 1941 and a Doctor of Juridical Science in 1950. The University of New Brunswick awarded him an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree in 1968.

He came to Michigan in the summer of 1946 as a lecturer in law and research associate in the Law School. After a year at Stanford, he was appointed assistant professor of law at Michigan in 1947, and was promoted to associate professor in 1950 and full professor in 1953.

He was director of legal research and chairman of the graduate committee of the Law School from 1954 until his appointment as dean in 1960. He also has served as chairman of the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs, the highest elective faculty post on the campus.

As vice-president, Smith has been active in numerous institutional and academic groups. He is presently U-M representative to the Committee on Interinstitutional Cooperation, head of the MERT Computer Network board, the academic representative in the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. He also served with the special commission of the National Science Foundation whose report was instrumental
in developing the Research Applied to National Needs (RANN) program.

Dr. Smith is a member of the American Bar Association, the Michigan State Bar Association, Phi Delta Phi (honorary member), and the American Judicature Society. He has served on various committees of the state bar, was chairman of its real property section, and for a time was on the governing board.

His publications include a volume on Personal Life Insurance Trusts and co-editorship of one of the most widely used casebooks on property. In 1956 he collaborated with Prof. Lewis M. Simes in a comprehensive revision of The Law of Future Interests.

He is married to the former Alene Mulliken of Munden, Kan. They have two children, Stephanie (Mrs. John Niederhuber) in Ann Arbor, and Gregory, an attorney in San Francisco.

Three New Profs Join Law Faculty

Broadcasting regulation, environmental law, and the “compulsory process” clause under the Sixth Amendment are among the research interests of three new faculty members at the U-M Law School: Lee C. Bollinger, Jr., Philip Soper, and Peter K. Westen.

Bollinger is concerned with the rights of the electronic media. This summer he plans to examine that field and aspects of consumer law.

Bollinger graduated from the University of Oregon in 1968 and from Columbia Law School in 1971. He worked as a law clerk for Judge Wilfred Feinberg of the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and for Chief Justice Warren Burger of the U. S. Supreme Court. He has taught contracts and commercial transactions classes since joining the U-M faculty in the fall.

Prof. Soper, who specializes in environmental law, comes to the U-M from the Council on Environmental Quality in Washington, D. C., where he was a member of the general counsel’s staff from 1971-1973. In this capacity he handled legal and procedural issues concerning the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

After receiving his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Washington University (St. Louis) in 1964 and 1965, Soper graduated from Harvard Law School in 1969. He served as a law clerk to Justice Byron R. White on the U. S. Supreme Court, and then completed his doctoral dissertation work at Oxford in 1970-1971. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Washington University in 1972.

Bogota, Colombia. For the past two years Westen practiced law in Washington, D. C., with the firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, which specializes in federal civil and criminal litigation. Westen’s article, “The Proposed National Court of Appeals: A Threat to the Supreme Court?” appeared last year in the New York Review of Books. He has also written on conflicts of law. Westen’s current research involves study of the compulsory process clause under the Sixth Amendment.—Marty Hair

Appearance of Litigants Weighed in U-M Study

“Jurymen seldom convict a person they like, or acquit one they dislike.” This remark, made some 40 years ago by Clarence Darrow, the famous trial lawyer, may not be far from the truth, a University of Michigan study suggests.

Based on simulated automobile negligence trials, U-M researchers found that physical attractiveness of plaintiffs and defendants “appears to have a significant impact on juror decisions,” including the amount of damage compensation awarded in such cases.

And these findings, the researchers conclude, “suggest that our complacent belief in the equity of the judicial process deserves some careful review.”

The research was carried out by Richard A. Kulka, a doctoral candidate and assistant study director at the U-M’s Institute for Social Research, and Joan B. Kessler, formerly a U-M student and now an assistant professor of communications arts at Loyola University of Chicago.