Is it worth the trip?

Students often wonder if the expense of visiting a law school campus is worth it. In short, I believe it is worth the trip. Law school is a 2-4-year academic commitment. Though you can transfer to a different school, it is best to be comfortable with your first choice. When you considered your ideal undergraduate school, you probably thought about the location. Lubbock might not be the most exciting city in Texas, but something about it made you feel comfortable. I chose Lubbock because being in a small, college town is less distracting than being near a big city. It was safe to assume that I would mostly be interacting with other students regardless of where I went in town.

Maybe you chose to come to Lubbock because of the friendly faculty and student body here at Texas Tech. You wouldn’t have known about the attitudes of the students and teachers without a visit. The attitudes of the faculty and student body should be a top consideration when choosing a law school. You want to be sure you feel secure in your academic environment. Sharing similar attitudes with your peers means you will find ease when it comes to relating to your peers and forming new relationships, business or personal. If the students seem competitive and you’re looking for an environment of peer encouragement, that campus may not be for you. Perhaps the professors at a different school have an open-door policy and are willing to meet outside of their office hours to guide their students. If that’s something you were looking for, you may move that school to the top of your list.

The attitudes of the faculty and students will impact your performance in law school, but so will the environment surrounding campus. I mentioned that Lubbock appealed to me for undergraduate school because it is a small town with the school as the focus. I’m not looking for a small town for law school. I’m ready to take the leap to the city now that I am more mature, responsible, and less distractible. If you have city dreams but find yourself in a small-town school, you may start to feel dissatisfied with your environment. Maybe your school of choice is surrounded by road construction that will hinder your ability to get around town for the next few years. If you’re anything like me, you wouldn’t want to deal with that for more than a month. The idea is to a gist of the area surrounding your law school of choice. If you don’t feel comfortable with the neighborhood, you risk having a negative experience.
I realize visiting a law school campus can be expensive. I’m currently an out-of-state student from Florida applying to law schools in New York. If you didn’t know, a weekend trip to New York out of Lubbock costs a pretty penny. So, what’s my plan? I took an alternative route to visiting every school I applied to. You have the option to visit each school prior to starting their application. If you’re staying in-state and have the resources to visit a campus prior to applying, I would recommend it so you don’t risk wasting funds and time in the future. However, most of us will not have that luxury. My plan is to visit the schools that I have been accepted to. I weigh my options as answers come in and I have started to formulate a list of my ideal schools. I intend on visiting my top three campuses this summer.

As you continue your law school journey, budget some time and funds for campus visits. The environment in which you live can make or break your performance. You want to feel safe, comfortable, and secure in your environment. You want to know if you share the same attitudes and beliefs as your peers prior to the first week of classes. Put yourself in a positive environment for law school. Make the trips to be sure that really is where you want to be. You never know, some campuses may surprise you.

- Alex-Marie Baez