Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we have a special guest, Steve Schwartz, the founder of LSAT Unplugged. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the Law School Toolbox, the Bar Exam Toolbox, and the career-related website CareerDicta. Alison also runs The Girl's Guide to Law School. If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the contact form on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today we are excited to welcome Steve Schwartz back to the podcast to discuss the latest news in law school admissions. Steve is the founder of LSAT Unplugged. So Steve, thanks for joining us today.

Steve Schwartz: Thanks so much for having me, Lee. Pleasure to be back with you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, for those of our listeners that are not familiar with your work or haven't heard you on the podcast before, can you share a little bit about what you do, how you support folks as they study for the LSAT and apply to law school?

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, absolutely. So, I started off teaching the LSAT back in 2005, doing a lot of one-on-one tutoring, and over the years I've added on a lot of resources, including live online classes via Zoom, on-demand video lessons, coaching programs with me, as well as a team of instructors offering those live classes several nights per week. So, lots of opportunities for folks to check out my work on my YouTube channel, my podcast. I also have a book on Amazon, a couple of books actually, called *Mastering the LSAT*. So, folks can check out any of those resources for more.

Lee Burgess: Awesome. Okay, so there's a lot of exciting stuff happening. I mean, exciting for those of us in the legal education world. Maybe not everyone would say they're super exciting. But there are a lot of changes kind of on the horizon that I'm excited to talk about today. First up, let's talk about the American Bar Association, the ABA's Legal Education Committee passing a measure that would remove the requirement that law schools have to use any standardized test for admission. It's expected to pass its final step in February 2023, and the earliest it would seem to go into effect is 2025. So, what's going on here? Is this a done deal? I did a little research on this, and it seems like they thought about changing the rule in 2018 but didn't. So, what's different now?

Steve Schwartz: It seems that there's a lot more support for this than there was previously. It passed the Legal Education Committee on a vote of 15 to 1, and a lot of folks

were expecting it would be a little bit closer, but everyone accepted one holdout wanted to remove that LSAT requirement. And so, at this point, it's pretty much a done deal. Of course, there could be a last minute radical change of some kind, but this does appear that it's going to go forward because, as you say, it goes to the House of Delegates in February 2023. Even if the House of Delegates rejected it, it would go back to that same committee that passed it 15 to 1, so they could just pass it again, which kind of seems strange, but that's how they operate. So, this does appear like it's virtually certain to go through.

Lee Burgess: And what is the main motivation, do you think, that the ABA is at least citing as the main reason for wanting to change this requirement?

Steve Schwartz: I think there are some concerns around diversity. A lot of people feel that due to the differences among different groups in terms of standardized test performance, that the LSAT perhaps increases the gaps. And so, they might think that it would allow a more diverse entering class for different law schools. Of course, there are some problems with that logic potentially. I think there are a lot of people on both sides of this who have good reasoning here, but we could talk through what might happen if you were to remove it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I thought that was actually something that was surprising to me when I dug into this. I am aware of the criticism of standardized testing as being unfairly...

Steve Schwartz: Discriminatory maybe.

Lee Burgess: Yes, that's right. That is discriminatory to minority students or first generation students. But what was interesting is when I was reading some of the commentary around this, it seemed that there was a diversity argument that if you take out the LSAT or GRE requirement, diversity is actually going to be trickier because the tests are an equalizer, versus pedigree of undergrad and exposure to internships, or letters of recommendation, or all of the other things that might be considered. And I typically hadn't heard folks using a diversity argument in favor of standardized testing.

Steve Schwartz: Well, I think that argument doesn't get enough play and I think it actually has a lot of merit, because the LSAT, the GRE, virtually every standardized test, you see these differences in performance among racial groups. And one might argue, reasonably so, that these might stem from earlier educational gaps, due to local funding of schools, for example. So, these tests may simply reflect differences in ability that can stem from earlier in a child's education, not necessarily foster or increase those gaps. I do think if we were to remove the standardized testing requirement, and as you said, we have pedigree of undergrad, we have undergraduate GPA, we have ability to hire admissions consultants to help you with your personal statements. In other words, the LSAT

is actually a harder factor to game or to improve significantly with private support than it might be to improve your application in other areas. So, the LSAT is actually quite difficult to improve on score significantly, even if you put tons of money into it. Of course, you kind of help students do that all the time, but if I were to help someone improve their personal statement, I could do that much more easily.

Lee Burgess: Got it. Yeah, and I also thought it was interesting that the law deans came out and were not a fan of removing this requirement. They said that without the testing requirement, admissions offices are going to have to put more weight on undergraduate GPAs, and as we were discussing, the prestige of undergraduate university. And so, I guess 60 law deans wrote to the ABA and were like, "Please don't do this." And the ABA just said, "Sorry. We don't agree with you." I thought it was interesting that that many law deans came out and said, "Please don't do this."

Steve Schwartz: Well, I think they find it useful. Law schools currently are, of course, required to use some test for admission, and virtually every school does use the LSAT, some also take the GRE. But they weigh it more heavily than they are required to weigh it. They could weigh it theoretically 1%, but instead they actually weigh it more heavily than undergrad GPA on average. Most schools weigh it more heavily, and in many cases, they weigh it three to five times as heavily as undergraduate GPA, likely because, as the executive director of LSAT Kellye Testy pointed out, undergraduate GPAs are so inflated as to be virtually worthless, which I think was a hyperbole, but I think she had a point. I could tell you it's a lot easier to get a 4.0 in English than it is to get a 4.0 in Engineering, right? I think we all know that.

Lee Burgess: True. And different schools are notorious for different grade standards, so I think that's pretty commonly accepted as well. One thing that I do think is interesting about this dialogue is the ABA is not saying that they can't use the LSAT; they're saying they're not required to use the LSAT. So, schools could still opt to use the LSAT as part of their admissions requirements.

Steve Schwartz: That's a very good point that you brought up, and I think that gets lost in a lot of headlines around this. Law schools will still be free to use the LSAT, no one's saying that they can't. And of course, as I said, a lot of law schools weigh the LSAT more heavily than they need to. Every law school weighs it more heavily than they need to. That suggests then that even if they were not required to use it, most would still use it anyway because they find it useful, as you said, an equalizer comparing applicants from all sorts of different backgrounds, different majors, schools with different degrees of great inflation. It's really the one constant.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And the other interesting thing is that a lot of schools use the LSAT to award scholarships, merit-based scholarships. And if they don't have that tool, I think it's also going to be tricky for them to decide who they want to coax into their program with scholarships.

Steve Schwartz: That's right. We can get to the rankings a little bit later if you'd like, but as you see then, you could simply, if you want to get a full ride to law school, choose an undergraduate major, an undergraduate institution where you can easily get a 4.0 or 4.2 maybe, right?

Lee Burgess: Right. I know we're going to talk about the rankings a little bit later, but I don't think that schools are going to want to do away with merit-based scholarships, even if there isn't as much of the rankings, because they still are going to want high rates of bar passage, they're still going to want impressive alumni that go on to do amazing things. But I think even that without some sort of equalizer, it is going to be harder, because unfortunately, the LSAT does correlate to law school success.

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, it does, it does. And so, even if you remove the LSAT requirement, we do still have the bar passage requirement on the other end, and so those two somewhat tie together. It's not a perfect correlation, of course, but those who do well on one exam are probably more likely do well on another exam than those who don't.

Lee Burgess: Right. And what about the application process? So, if some schools require the LSAT and some schools don't, is it going to become a free-for-all for those schools that don't? I would think that then every 20-something who doesn't know what to do with their life might feel like they want to apply to law school just to see if they can get in.

Steve Schwartz: I do think that could happen. I do think that schools that don't require any standardized testing make it much easier to apply. They would get a flood of applicants who may be applying on a whim, that may not be that serious about law school. They may be doing it for lack of a better option, and then that kind of makes you wonder, are they investing all this money and taking out this debt for the right reasons? How likely are they to succeed in law school? Of course, there are some people who are serious about law school and are just scared of the LSAT. I sympathize with them, but I do think the LSAT also does serve an important role in general.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I could definitely see second-career individuals who are really separated from standardized testing. I know that the LSAT can be incredibly challenging for a lot of folks in that position, because they have been out of the testing game for so long. But that is not a huge portion of law applicants.

Steve Schwartz: No, it's not. They're out there for sure, I do come across them, but yeah, they're not the majority for sure. The majority are probably directly out of undergrad or within five years.

Lee Burgess: And you mentioned it, I think this student debt crisis is also something that cannot be ignored. If students are finding it easier to go to law school or can go to law school on a whim, my guess would be some of the schools that drop these requirements may be private institutions, they may be looking for more students, and they're going to have to flunk out a percentage of their class to make sure that they can still meet the ABA's bar exam requirement, which some lower ranked law schools end up having to do. And you can incur a lot of debt while just trying out law school, testing it out, and that's a lot. I know when I was applying to law school, I took it step-by-step. I wasn't 100% sure in the very beginning that this was the goal that I wanted to reach, even though I am the daughter of two lawyers. Maybe that's even more reason why I wasn't sure that this was the goal that I wanted to do. But I took it step-by-step and I said, "If I have myself study for the LSAT, if I can discipline myself to do that, then that's a really good sign that I want to reach this goal." And then it was like, "If I can discipline myself to write a really good personal statement, that's the next evidence to myself that this is a really good goal." I think there is also an emotional component to having these kinds of little hurdles that you have to overcome to decide to make a change or invest in something like this.

Steve Schwartz: I think you're right. I think to some extent it serves a ritualistic purpose. I mean, look at the movie Legally Blonde – it's the big obstacle. But on the other hand, it also is a way to prove to yourself that this is the right career path for you. You don't necessarily need to ace the LSAT, of course, but it is a positive indication if you can. And it costs roughly $200 to take the LSAT. It's a much cheaper test than paying a full semester of tuition.

Lee Burgess: Yes, for sure. And until they either do away with or fully change the bar – which I know that they're talking about changing the UBE to the new bar exam, but to be honest, I think we have a bar exam for a long time coming – some sort of testing is going to be part of the law school experience. It is a key part of not only your law school experience, but your ability to become licensed, unless you want to get licensed in Wisconsin. And I think that you also have to just appreciate that studying for these tests is something you're going to have to do. It's a skill you have to work on. Not saying you have to ace the LSAT, but if you cannot go through the LSAT process and get a score that can get you into law school, then I think you at least need to pause and say, "Do I need some sort of accommodations? Is there something else going on here? Do I really want to be here? Am I self-sabotaging myself that I can't do it?" There are lots of reflection moments that I think would be important to have if this is something that you either can't make yourself do or you don't want to make yourself do. Because as you said, $200 is not nothing, but sitting for the bar exam every time is not

$200. It is much more expensive. I haven't run my numbers recently, but it's usually over $1,000 just to sit for the test. And then on top of that, you have accommodations, it's multiple days, all of that kind of stuff. So, this is a great tester test, I guess, to make sure that this is an area that you want to go into, and then also you're willing to study for these hard standardized tests, which are just right now part of becoming a lawyer.

Steve Schwartz: Yeah. On the positive side of things, if you do well on the LSAT, as you said earlier, there's merit aid. You can make a lot of money by studying for the LSAT, on top of the fact that it's worthwhile to put yourself in a situation where you can ask yourself the question, "Is this what I really want to do?" Because there will be other tests down the line, and from the law school's perspective, they do need a way to evaluate applicants, and they do need a quantitative way to do it because there are just so many applications. The top schools have acceptance rates of less than 10%.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I remember the year I went to law school. I applied to law school, to make myself sound old, in 2004, when there was a huge flood of applicants. Great timing on my part! And I remember getting these lists of like, "We have had unprecedented numbers of 20,000 applicants." I remember sitting there being like, "How do they even dig through that many without some sort of cut-off, without saying, 'We're not even going to really read a certain portion of the applicants because they don't meet these certain thresholds.'" It would be quite an undertaking to do admissions without any sort of cut-off point or piles that you can create. I don't envy the admissions departments for needing to come up with a new process, because I think they would have to come up with something very new because they couldn't just remove the LSAT and then go about their business as they were.

Steve Schwartz: No, they would need to add some other barrier of some kind, just to stem the flood, because as you said, if they were to remove the LSAT requirement, then some schools would get way more applicants. How do they sift through all of that?

Lee Burgess: Right. And let's be honest, LSAC makes pretty good money. I figure that they are not going to want to let this test go down quietly.

Steve Schwartz: No. It was funny to see – this was actually, I think, the first situation I've seen where the LSAT and GRE people were on the same side of the debate – they're both defending standardized tests. In the past, LSAC was trying to keep GRE or ETS out of this, but now they're on the same side arguing in favor of testing.

Lee Burgess: Right. They're like, "No, no, we need this testing, you need us, you need both of us. We're a team."

Steve Schwartz: Right, right, right.

Lee Burgess: Require more tests. Don't even have alternatives, just make them take both.

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, that could be a compromise.

Lee Burgess: Well, we mentioned it a little bit already, but this really goes into this idea of what's going to happen with the U.S. News rankings, because I do think that some of these decisions by law schools around admissions are somewhat tied to the U.S. News rankings, which have been, in my opinion, of minimal value since I've been following the U.S. News ranking, since I was, what, a teenager when I started looking at schools for undergraduate. So this year, I'm sure most people listening to the podcast have seen that schools are starting to make an exodus and saying they are no longer going to give their data to the U.S. News rankings. I think they're saying they don't want to be included as well, but I don't think it's as cut and dry as that. So, what's happening with all this kind of hullabaloo around the U.S. News ranking?

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, sure. So I think this was maybe a month ago or so now this exodus began. Yale announced very publicly they were going to stop submitting self-reported data to U.S. News, which U.S. News actually needs to put together their rankings information, like per student expenditures, for example. Shortly after that, I think it was the same day, Harvard announced they were also pulling out. The schools had probably chatted prior to those announcements. And then over the next week, several other schools – I think at this point, now it's 12 out of the top 14 law schools – announced they were no longer going to participate in the U.S. News rankings. However, of course, U.S. News will still be able to rank schools, even if the schools do not participate.

Lee Burgess: And I do think it's kind of interesting that it's these top schools who are saying, "We don't need the rankings, but we're also Ivy League schools. Everyone knows were prestigious." It's not like Yale is saying, "No one's going to want to come to Yale if I'm not at the top of the U.S. News rankings."

Steve Schwartz: Well, I think you're right, that schools had been unhappy with the rankings for a very long time because of how it incentivizes them to make decisions and spend their money. But this was never going to happen without the top schools doing it. So, they've been grumbling for years, but a lower-ranked school might be scared about how it would be impacted. But Yale and Harvard are big enough, they feel safe enough doing this, and then there's strength in numbers. If they all pull together on this, they are able to incentivize U.S. News to make some sort of change.

Lee Burgess: Yes.

Steve Schwartz: Which they have.

Lee Burgess: And I think folks who don't really understand how the U.S. News rankings work, the law schools send them this data, but they know how they do the rankings. And so, they're trying to make sure that their LSAT scores are at a certain level, and their per student spending is at a certain level, or their faculty to student ratio... So they're strategically either reporting data or creating data, one of the two, to make it so they can get the highest ranking as possible. And that's not an amazing way to ask schools to have decision-making power.

Steve Schwartz: No, it's not.

Lee Burgess: It's not always the best thing for the student; it's just the best thing for the ranking.

Steve Schwartz: That's right. And so it causes a number of unfortunate side effects, some of which the schools are unhappy with, some of which are actually bad for students as well – for example, the per student expenditure number. If you spend more money per student, you rise in the rankings, so if you charge more tuition, you can then spend more money and students can just take out more loans to pay for that. And who's to say the expenditures are actually, truly serving the students?

Lee Burgess: Right, yeah. Who knows what those expenditures are on?

Steve Schwartz: It could be anything. It could be nicer carpeting.

Lee Burgess: Right. It could be more pizza lunches. Who knows?

Steve Schwartz: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: And then there's this issue that we were mentioning earlier in this podcast, about the LSAT, that the U.S. News rankings also do motivate schools to offer merit aid. And so, there might be a shake-up in whether or not they still want to offer merit aid or the balance fee merit aid and need-based aid, and how all of those programs are structured in each individual school. But the rankings – and I hadn't really thought about this before – are really driving how even aid is given out.

Steve Schwartz: Yes. And that was one of the biggest reasons named by both Yale and Harvard as to why they don't want to participate in the rankings anymore, because participating is in a way supporting the rankings as they stand. And they said, "This causes lots of schools to give out money for merit aid, when if there's a limited pool, that's taking away money that could have gone to need-based aid." But for those students who really rely upon merit aid and are not contenders for

need-based aid, they may actually lose out if the schools were to shift where they devote that money.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It seems like there's not a ton of transparency in this, and then there might even be less transparency as the schools figure out what to do with this.

Steve Schwartz: That's right, yeah. No, I actually suspect that the schools that switch more to need-based aid may not give out as much in total. Let's say, just to make up a number, they were giving out a million dollars in aid total, and let's say $100,000 was going to need-based aid, the rest was going to merit aid. They might shrink the size of the pie. Who's to say they're going to keep it constant? And as you said, there is no transparency on this, just what we see students self-report.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, the top 12 schools, or 12 of the top 14 pull out of the rankings. So, does U.S. News just not publish them in the rankings? What do you think is going to happen next?

Steve Schwartz: Well, they will definitely still include all the schools in the rankings. Rankings without Yale and Harvard would be a pretty questionable ranking considering they've been around the top, for decades. So, they will still keep ranking every school. And U.S. News very, very recently, at the beginning of January, they announced that they were going to change how they ranked schools because too many schools were going to stop reporting data. So, they've changed so that they are now going to create their rankings solely based upon publicly available data. U.S. News can still pull LSAT medians and GPA medians from the American Bar Association 509 reports, which all law schools do have to submit to.

Lee Burgess: Right. And bar passage rates, which are also public.

Steve Schwartz: Yes.

Lee Burgess: I think per school. So, the rankings are not going anywhere, because let's be honest, U.S. News makes a ton of money off of these rankings. They're not going to stop doing it – that would just be a foolish business choice on their part. So they're going to have to come up with a new way to do it. Even if it's based on publicly available information, I think that the rankings are still inherently problematic for so many reasons, partly because many people have a variety of reasons to go to specific law schools, and most of that cannot be reflected in the rankings. And I think a lot of students feel pressure to go to a "higher ranked law school" because it does not meet their needs. They might not have the clinics that they care about, or some of the professors that are doing research on the areas that they are interested in. Just because this idea that they feel they're supposed to go to the highest ranked school. And I think that that is a terrible mind game for a lot of students. And it is important as we talk more about the value of these rankings, that students really, I would think,

need to just take this information as one piece of the puzzle of choosing a law school.

Steve Schwartz: You're absolutely right. And I agree with everything you said. To add on top of that, just geography. Schools have strong reputations in their region in many cases than they do nationally.

Lee Burgess: True.

Steve Schwartz: So to go to a school ranked 15 across the country, versus the school ranked 18 in your backyard wouldn't make a lot of sense, if you want to stay where you currently live.

Lee Burgess: Right. Or if school 18 gives you $20,000 a year.

Steve Schwartz: Yes.

Lee Burgess: And school 13 doesn't and you want to work in an area of the law where you do not need that national exposure, that national alumni network. I think you really have to think carefully about that. And I think that the debt... It would be interesting to see if... I don't even know if you could pull data for this, but how the rankings of schools drive how much debt students are willing to incur. Because I do think that so often students feel motivated that they have to take this better offer for possibly less money, even if you can negotiate your scholarships, because they're like, "It's so much better, but is it worth $100,000 better, or more?"

Steve Schwartz: Yes. There is a number where it would not make sense.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Okay, we've now talked about whether or not the LSAT is going to be as important as it used to be, but it seems like probably might be; that the U.S. News rankings seem to be disappearing, but they're not. They're going to still exist, they're just going to be maybe massaged a little better, changed a little bit. And the third thing that seems to be going on is that the LSAC is talking about phasing out everybody's favorite logic game section of the LSAT in 2024. This is the most notorious part of the LSAT, so what is happening?

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, this is a shocker and I would definitely be sad to see the current logic game section go. Folks hate them at first, but they often end up loving them. But yes, it will likely change in the next couple of years. What spurred this change? A blind test taker named Angelo Binno – last name B-I-N-N-O, for anyone who wants to look this up – he sued LSAC contending that he was at an unfair disadvantage on the LSAT because he could not benefit from diagramming to solve the logic games the way that other test takers can. And I've got to say he has a point. I mean, try doing logic games without making any

sort of diagram at all – it's going to be quite difficult. So, he sued LSAC under the Americans with Disabilities Act. They settled, and part of the agreement was that they needed to complete research and development into a new version of the test that would enable everyone to take the exam without the current logic game section. That was in late 2019. So, the four-year period of research and development would conclude at the end of 2023, which we are currently coming up to.

Lee Burgess: Okay, so what is this new section going to look like? Is it that you don't need to use scratch paper? Is that the motivation, or are they really coming out with something completely different?

Steve Schwartz: Well, unfortunately, I can't say too much because I haven't actually seen what the new section might look like. They've been testing out some experimental questions, but those are not disclosed at all. And they don't let test prep folks look at those unfortunately, so I wasn't able to participate, even though I would have loved to. But the idea is that the new questions, the new version of logic games that will replace the current section, test takers would not benefit nearly as much from being able to create diagrams.

Lee Burgess: Interesting. I used to work for a test prep company, and every season they would send a number of people that worked for the test prep company to go sit for the test. This is for the SAT. And even 40-something-year-old people would go in with baseball hats, because you could take the SAT as many times as you want, just so they could see what the experimental questions were, mostly. But to also just experience what was the content of the test every single time. And it always made me laugh to think of these 40-somethings in there with their baseball hats on. And they said that the students were so stressed out that nobody noticed them. Nobody thought it was strange that there was somebody 20 years older than everyone else in the room trying to take this test.

Steve Schwartz: Oh, that's hilarious. I'm thinking of that Steve Buscemi meme, "How do you do, fellow kids?"

Lee Burgess: I know, right? Yeah, it was pretty funny. So are they going to start releasing model questions, or how are people who are thinking about taking the LSAT in the next couple of years going to know what to expect?

Steve Schwartz: Yes, so LSAC will definitely release sample questions, some sample information far, far in advance of when this new replacement logic game section goes live. So for anyone listening in 2023 and you're taking it in 2023 – don't worry, you will still be experiencing the current section of logic games that has been around since June 1991, with no significant changes to that section. So, all that previous practice material, all that test prep resources are still relevant. But if you are taking it, I'm going to estimate in June 2024 or later, you will probably be taking

a very different section. And so, for anyone planning ahead, I would say try to get this done, try to be done with the LSAT before the new section comes out, just because there won't be as many resources available. There will still be some, and I will work tirelessly to create new material for this as quickly as I can. But just by definition, there're 400 released logic games currently. There're going to be less than 400 for the new one.

Lee Burgess: Oh yeah. I mean, I would guess 10, maybe. Probably less than that. They're so hard to create that they're just not going to release that many.

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, I think you're right about that. I think it would just be a couple of sections, which would be maybe eight, maybe 12. Assuming it's a set of four, who even knows what it'll be. But it's not going to be nearly as much; It'll be a handful. And then other folks will create, or simulate the questions. I might try to do the same, depending on what they look like. But yeah, there's not going to be nearly as much. So, if you can plan ahead, try to be done with the LSAT before that June 2024 date.

Lee Burgess: Do you think they're going to change the overall scoring, or are they going to try and keep the scoring consistent?

Steve Schwartz: I would think it'll still be out of 180. So I think it'll still be on the 120 to 180 band. This is removing one of the three scored sections. So I don't see it being a huge radical change to the LSAT, other than that one section specifically. So let's say, currently, you have roughly 25 logical reasoning questions, roughly 27 reading comprehension questions, and roughly 23 logic games questions. So I think they'll just sub in a new set of 23.

Lee Burgess: Okay, alright. I bet this anxiety-inducing for a lot of people.

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, I certainly understand that. Folks typically don't like change if things have been the way they have been for quite a long time. But we've still got plenty of time to prepare for this. If you're listening to this now, my guess would be that you're probably taking it in the next year or two. So if you can just take it before June 2024, you'll be with the old version. Otherwise, you're taking it in 2025 or beyond, there'll be plenty for you. Just that short window where there won't be that much available.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, those first couple of tests.

Steve Schwartz: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: So, we've shared a lot about the changing landscape of law school admissions. So if anyone is considering applying in the next few years, how should they think about admissions if they're planning to apply? What should they prioritize? How

should they stay on top of the changes? What are the best ways to see what's coming down the pipe, because it seems to be an ever-evolving landscape? But how do they make sure that they're doing the things necessary to be an attractive applicant, whatever that means, in the next few years?

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, that's a great question. So we've talked over a lot of things here – the LSAT potentially being optional, the U.S. News rankings, schools pulling out of that, and this logic game section change. And the truth is that if you're taking the LSAT any time in the next few years, very little will change for you except that logic game section. The vast majority of schools will likely still require the LSAT, U.S. News will still keep ranking all law schools, and the logic game section will change likely in 2024, but that's pretty much it. So, in terms of being a strong applicant, take the LSAT, get the highest score possible, apply to law schools, negotiate your merit aid, as always. There may be less available, who's to say? If there is less available, that would only give you more reason to get an even higher LSAT score, because those medians will still be publicly available, U.S. News will still use them, and you want to go to the best school possible with the most scholarship money possible.

Lee Burgess: Yes. And negotiating for merit aid is something that we have talked about in the podcast before, but I think that this is really an important point that a lot of students don't realize is available to them. So, I want to call that out as well, that if you have acceptances from multiple schools and you have aid offered from multiple schools, and they think you're an attractive applicant, you should go and try and work one offer to go to whichever school you want to go to with the most aid. And I think that just doesn't occur to a lot of folks, to negotiate something like a scholarship. But you really do want to do that. Law school debt – mine's almost gone – but it hangs around for a long time, and you want to minimize that as much as possible if you can.

Steve Schwartz: That's absolutely right. You're going to be a future lawyer – start negotiating like one. You are being an informed consumer. This is not just a clean cut transaction, like you walk into Target or Walmart. This is a place where there is room, there is leverage here, and the schools really do want you. And so, if you can make a strong case for yourself and you can respectfully and reasonably lay out your different options and say, "I've applied to multiple schools. I'd love to choose yours, but I just can't make the numbers work at this point considering cost of living in this area." Whatever it is.

Lee Burgess: Right. Yeah, I think this is a really big deal. And these numbers sound like monopoly money, I think. Especially if you are younger and just recently out of undergrad, these numbers are so big. You're like, "Well, what is another $10,000? What is another $20,000?" But when you understand how the interest works on those, it's actually a lot of money. I'm not a mathematician, but I can tell you it's a lot of money. It's not $10,000, it's not $20,000. So, you do want to

advocate for yourself. Like you said, respectfully advocate for yourself, because a difference of $10,000 or $20,000 is actually significant when it comes to debt plus interest over a long-term timeframe.

Steve Schwartz: Yes, absolutely. You obviously can't pay it off all at once because you're going to have your living expenses.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. Although I think we did a great podcast a while back with someone who continued to work a big firm job while living like a student, basically, to just pay down their debt as fast as possible. There's an argument to be made for that, but oftentimes after you have lived like a student to get through law school, the last thing you want to do is to continue to live like a student when you are working a high-paying job.

Steve Schwartz: No, certainly. That's quite admirable, that particular case, the one that you interviewed. That's tough, that's not for everybody. Especially as you get older, if you're going to have a family, if you're going to have kids, you may not be able to do that.

Lee Burgess: Very, very true. I did wait to buy myself a new car until I passed the bar though. That was my big fear. I was like, "I have this job, but what if I don't pass the bar? And then I lose my job and then I won't be able to afford my new car payments." So it was like I got my bar passage and then the next day I bought my Mini Cooper, and I was very excited.

Steve Schwartz: Nice. It's a pretty cool reward.

Lee Burgess: I know, it was a big, awesome reward. One of my favorite cars ever. But now I'm a mom of two and you can't cram everyone in a Mini Cooper anymore. So, the Mini Cooper has gone. It's part of a different life. Alright, well, as we wind up, where can listeners learn more about what you do, your products, your services, and listen to your other thoughts about the LSAT?

Steve Schwartz: Yeah, absolutely. So again my name is Steve Schwartz. My website is lsatunplugged.com. You can also keep up-to-date with all these changes as they unfold further on my YouTube channel – LSAT Unplugged, the LSAT Unplugged podcast. I am also on Instagram, TikTok. You can find me pretty much anywhere. And you can always reach out via email too, just help@lsatunplugged.com.

Lee Burgess: Awesome. Well, with that, thanks for joining us, Steve. It was a super interesting conversation. And I don't know, maybe in six months everything will have changed again, and we can have you back and talk about what else is new in six months.

Steve Schwartz: I'd love it. I'll keep you posted.

Lee Burgess: Alright, perfect. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. You can reach us via the contact form on LawSchoolToolbox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. You can reach us by email at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always reach out to us via the contact form at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

RESOURCES:

Start Law School Right
LSAT Unplugged
LSAT Unplugged YouTube channel
LSAT Unplugged podcast
Mastering the LSAT: The Student's Guide to Success, by Steve Schwartz
U.S. News 2023 Best Law Schools
Law School Admission Council
American Bar Association
Podcast Episode 96: How to Rapidly Pay Off Law School Debt (with Guest Financial Panther)
Podcast Episode 256: Tips for Applying to Law School (w/Anna Ivey)
Podcast Episode 303: What's New with the LSAT? (w/Steve Schwartz)
Podcast Episode 338: Talking About Law School Admissions (w/Sydney Montgomery)
Everything You Need to Know About Law School Scholarships
How to Effectively Self-Study for the LSAT
Using Blind Review to Effectively Review Your LSAT Practice Test Results