Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we are talking about 10 things to consider when getting ready for your third year of law school, the 3L year. 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.

Hi, this is Lee from the Law School Toolbox. Welcome back. Today we are talking about 10 things to consider when getting ready for your third year of law school, the 3L year. Woohoo! The summer before your 3L year can be super busy, as you may or may not be a summer associate or have another legal job. Alison, what did you do before your 3L year in law school?

Alison Monahan: Well, I had a super busy summer, because I started my first summer associate position days after classes ended, and I was actually still doing the writing competition, I think, at that point. Or am I confusing it with a different year?

Lee Burgess: That would probably be a different year.

Alison Monahan: That would be a different year. That was my 1L mistake of the summer. I was like, "No, I was in a different copy room, making copies late at night." I did actually start my second summer job really early, I don't know why. I guess because I had to fit in a partial one later in the summer, but I started much sooner than other people. So I started literally days after classes ended. And then I went to London after a couple of weeks in New York. And so then I was in London for I think six weeks, and then I came back, and I had to do more weeks at one firm, and then I switched to a different firm that I'd worked at my 1L summer. I did that, and pretty much I came back and went straight to class, so it was very busy. I think I did it for money, obviously. Being a summer associate is pretty lucrative. But yeah, it was a pretty crazy summer. How about you?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that was way crazier than mine. I just did one summer associate gig with a firm that I ended up going to practice with. I did find it very busy because of all the social events. That was a lot. And then I also met my now husband that summer as well. So I was trying to be very cool and sort of, but not too available. But then I was also really tired because I was going out to social events with the firm, and then I would go out with him, and then I was getting

up early to go to work. And it was a lot. I just remember being really tired, to the extent that I had joined a gym for the summer near the firm's office, so I could work out before work. And one day I got there and I slept in my car.

Alison Monahan: What?

Lee Burgess: Yes, I just got there and there was no way I was going to work out. This is like 6:30 in the morning or something like that. And so I just tilted my seat back in the parking garage and took an hour nap, and then went into the gym and showered and went to work.

Alison Monahan: That's funny.

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I was also commuting. When I was in New York, I had a 45-minute commute, I think, every morning at rush hour, like New York summer. Yeah, the whole thing was just a lot.

Lee Burgess: It's a lot. And being in that professional environment is very different from being in school. You also have to be able to dress professionally, and you maybe can't roll in with your hair wet every day like maybe you do at school. I think there's a lot that goes into it, so it is very exhausting. But then you also just can't be completely checked out that you've got to go back to school and finish law school as well.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, for sure. I definitely think there're things you want to be thinking about. In my case, my summer didn't go very well. So then I was like, "Oh, shoot, I guess I really need to apply and get a clerkship. I don't want to go back to this place." All these things.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So let's run through some things to think about during the summer before your 3L year. So, nobody likes to think about this, but it's time to start thinking about the bar. Sorry guys, it's time. It's no fun, but you've got to do it, because it's coming up, and it's coming up fast. That third year goes by super fast.

Alison Monahan: And depending on your school, you may get very, very little information. I got very little information about the bar. Your school may, on the contrary, have tons of stuff for you to do and take classes and whatever. But you want to be thinking about this. What exam are you actually going to take if you can't decide

which state to take it in? Think about that. And how are you going to prepare for it? Are there classes you can take your 3L year? What bar prep options are there? There are a lot of different things out there, so you can start exploring that. You're going to have to do work and prepare for the MPRE during the year, probably. We recommend that. Don't wait till the last minute. But that's a good option to kind of try out some programs and see what seems to be working for you. And most of those, if not all of them, are free.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, definitely try and figure out what you think you're going to do for bar prep. Then, as you mentioned, you're going to have to sit for the MPRE, which is annoying. It's not the worst test in the world, but it is annoying. And so, you need to decide if you're going to take it in August, or if you're going to take it, they always have one in the fall. I took it in the fall of my 3L year. But, depending on your work schedule, you may decide that you want to take it over the summer. You just need to have a plan, because here's where it gets sticky. I say the MPRE is like the driver's test of becoming a lawyer. You really want to pass it, but sometimes you don't, and you need the opportunity to take it again. But the stickler is, they only offer it a couple times a year. And what you don't want to do is wait until the spring administration, accidentally fail it, and then you can't get licensed until you pass it. Oops!

Alison Monahan: Right. So, I know it won't surprise you to know that I was not paying attention to this during my 3L year and I had to take the spring administration. I think to be fair to me, I did that partly because I was actually taking a Professional Responsibility class my 3L year and I thought it'd be better to wait and take the class and then take the exam. No, that probably was not a good call, because people do fail the test. I knew people who'd failed it and so I was pretty freaked out by the time I actually had to sit for it, because people I knew had failed, and they were smart people, and I was like, "Oh my God, what if I fail this? Because now I don't have time to re-do it until too late." And it was this whole thing. So just try to take it early.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's just not worth the stress. It's just not worth the stress. The other thing you want to consider is if you are someone who needs accommodations, you have to file for accommodations for the MPRE. So, you need to go to the NCBE website, you need to find out what those deadlines are, and don't miss a deadline. Don't miss it, because they're not generous with those deadlines. So, you do have to be aware and make sure that you get all the paperwork in, so if you need accommodations that you have them to sit for this test.

Alison Monahan: And it's also good to get them if you think you need them on the bar, because that's one of the things they're going to look at: Is there a consistent pattern

that you had these accommodations? And so if you had them on the LSAT in law school, not the MPRE, they're going to be like, "Huh. Well, you pass that fine, so what's the big deal?" You just want to make a consistent record, basically.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, tip number three is to evaluate your academic performance and requirements. Make sure you have a plan to meet all your graduation credits and your coursework and any other criteria, like a writing requirement or a pro bono requirement. There can be lots of requirements, and sometimes schools aren't amazing at making sure that you have met all of your requirements. So, you need to do some legwork. I think we both know people who didn't graduate on time because they didn't do something that they just should have done. And then they walked without a diploma.

Alison Monahan: Right. And this is, again, one of these things that's just an annoyance, but ultimately it's your responsibility to make sure that you have complied with all of the graduation requirements. So, if you have to write a paper, is the paper long enough? Did you get the correct signatures? All of these things are annoying, but if you don't do them, the school is not just going to hand out your degree.

Lee Burgess: No, they're kind of sticklers about stuff like this.

Alison Monahan: Seriously. I mean, come on, the law school? No, they're not sticklers about any rules, are they?

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, they are, actually.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Basically it's like, get your act together. Spend some time getting your act together.

Alison Monahan: You want to know if you are required to do pro bono work and you haven't done any, you can't just necessarily roll up at the last second in April and get that done. You're probably going to need to have an organization that you're working with to get the hours, and they're going to have to be certified and all these things. You just need to plan for it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, tip number four is to continue expanding your network. So, you want to try and attend events linked to your summer job, which honestly can

become a little like a lot, but you still have to go to at least as many of them as you can go to. But there are also going to be outside networking events, maybe your school's having networking events. And as you said, you're not always sure that the summer job is where you want to land, so you don't want to put all your eggs in that basket. You want to keep networking and make sure you may have other options. So, keep connecting with people and putting your name out there, because you're very close to the beginning of your professional, your true professional life, and getting engagement from the legal community is super important.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think that third year is a great time to start thinking of focusing on shifting your idea of yourself from a student to a young professional. And what does that look like for you, and what does that mean? And I agree, I think the summer, busy though you are, is certainly probably going to have more time for socializing. The days are longer, you can grab an after work drink or coffee. Probably not coffee, but something.

Lee Burgess: Decaf.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, a snack with a friend, take a walk at night. There are a lot of opportunities for just this kind of informal building those relationships, and I think personal and professional. So, maybe you have friends that you haven't seen for a while in the same city. Summers, everybody's just a little looser then to socialize.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Who knows, you go on an Internet date, you can end up being married for a really long time.

Alison Monahan: You never know.

Lee Burgess: You never know.

Alison Monahan: You never know.

Lee Burgess: Definitely wouldn't have guessed that, based on how my summer had been going, but you just never know.

Alison Monahan: Wasn't on the Bingo card.

Lee Burgess: Wasn't on the Bingo card, no. Alright, another thing we think you should consider – tip number five – is to evaluate your finances. So, this means you

need to understand your loan repayment options, you need to research potential income-based plans. We just did a great episode over at the Bar Exam Toolbox that we'll link to from the founder of You Need A Budget, and he and I were talking about bar loans and surviving the summer and what it means to go into more debt to take the bar exam. It was a really interesting episode, and I highly recommend that even if you're not planning to take bar loans, it's worth listening to, because I will say that his perspective on money is very empowering and not just restrictive. And I think so often people don't want to talk about money because all they think it means is that you can't do what you want to do, but that's really not his philosophy. So, I think it makes a lot of sense to listen to that and sit down with your books, spend a little time looking at the realities, so you can make good choices.

Alison Monahan: I agree. I think that's a great episode. I enjoyed it, I learned a lot. And I also think one of the things that you need to consider is your scholarships, if you got them, might have been structured on the assumption that you were going to be working a summer associate job this summer. And if so, a lot of schools will front load your loans so that you might not get very much at the end, because they assume that you're going to be building up this money over the summer that you can use to pay for school, which may or may not be the case. It may or may not pay for all of your expenses. But I definitely remember I had to take out a private loan to make up the difference for some of that. So, that's definitely something you need to be aware of, are what are the options here? Am I getting less money than I've gotten the previous two years at the beginning of the school year? If so, you've got to figure out how to fill that gap.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. This stuff isn't always fun, but it's incredibly important. And if you don't want to listen to that episode, that's fine, but just don't take out credit card debt. Just don't do it. It's a terrible idea.

Alison Monahan: Right. And then the reality is, if you don't pay for your tuition, your school is also not going to give you your degree. So, you don't want to get to the very end and then find that you can't graduate because you need $10,000. That's a problem.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So just take some time, plan a Saturday, just open it up, use You Need A Budget, use a spreadsheet – doesn't really matter, but just do something to evaluate it. Alright, so after you've done your finances, then I think tip number six is, it's time to really look at the admission requirements for your chosen jurisdiction. Everybody's favorite moral character or character and fitness applications come up at the end of that summer, and you want to make sure that you have the money to pay those fees, because nothing in the legal world is free and you have to pay to apply for your character and fitness. I mean, it's a

lot. And the record keeping for that can be really painful, it takes time. You do not want to make mistakes. Do not make mistakes, do not misrepresent anything. So, if you aren't going to do that in your summer because you're too busy, make sure that you have your ducks in a row to take it on as soon as the year starts – your 3L year.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because you may have to do things like fingerprints that have to be done in certain places. There are all these bizarre things. Some states make you get letters from actual practicing attorneys in that state. Each state has its own rules, and you need to understand what they are. They're probably almost certainly going to make you have every address that you've ever lived at, which is completely crazy. Your Amazon...

Lee Burgess: Thank you, Amazon.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you never bother deleting your old addresses, that is a great place to get lots of them. Your credit report also has a lot of them on there. So, it is crazy some of the stuff that they ask you for, going back a very long time, since high school or something. I don't know, I lived like eight places in college in a year, which is like the summer I was moving and I was back and I switched this dorm. It's a lot. So, don't leave that to the last minute, because again, you don't want that to delay your admission, and they don't do things quickly. So, if you don't apply early – again, you probably won't be surprised to know that I don't think I submitted mine until maybe after I sat for the exam, or did not do it early. Yes, that's about right. But I did manage to get admitted, when I found out I'd passed the bar and was working for a judge. Although I think he had to pull some strings, basically, to get my moral character done in time, because he wanted to have a little ceremony and he's, "What do you mean you haven't done this?" And I was like, "Yeah, I couldn't decide which exam to take. Didn't know where to file it." He was like, "Oh my God, why did I hire you?"

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Well, luckily, Massachusetts isn't a very big state.

Alison Monahan: No, they did make me get letters from practicing attorneys there and I didn't know practicing attorneys in Massachusetts at that point, because I'd never lived there. It was a mess. Anyway, I got admitted, it was fine. But don't be me. Be Lee.

Lee Burgess: True. And also – let's just admit it – a number of people might have something in their history that they're a little worried about. Maybe you got picked up for underage drinking. Maybe you had a DUI.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I had a friend who got an underage DUI. Had to disclose that. I think they made her go to alcohol counseling, actually, even though it had been when she was 18.

Lee Burgess: Other things that sometimes need to be disclosed are if you've defaulted on any credit or loans, or filed for bankruptcy, or part of a lawsuit. There's a lot of stuff that could be a little hard to manage. And if you need support, there are lawyers who can help you handle this. But what's not fun is getting the letter that they don't really want to give you a pass on your character and fitness, and then you might have to go have a meeting with the bar, which is not fun. And then they just decide whatever they want to do with your application. So, that's why you don't want to rush this, because if there's something a little sticky that you're not sure how it is going to be handled, it may not stand in your way. But what will stand in your way is not disclosing it, not handling it professionally, and hoping they don't find it.

Alison Monahan: No, they'll find it. So I think if anyone has anything you might be a little concerned about, I would say talk to a lawyer who does this, even if you just get the initial consultation with them, you lay out the problem, they give you some solutions. It doesn't have to be a super big deal. Lots of people have slightly questionable behavior choices in their past that are not going to preclude them from being admitted. But you have to deal with it, and you have to be honest about it, because they will find it, and it is much, much worse if you've tried to hide it.

Lee Burgess: Yes, because even if it's a mistake, if they think you're lying, that does not look good. They would much rather, I think, you have a DUI, than to be caught lying.

Alison Monahan: And also, these are all court records. They're going to find it.

Lee Burgess: They're going to find Alright, so don't mess around with that. Okay, tip number seven is, update those resumes and materials, because you never know – you might not like that summer job, you might not get an offer from that summer job, you might decide that this path that you've been on is not what you want to do with your life. Don't let those materials get stale. So, revise it. Revise your resume, your cover letter. Make sure your writing samples are up to snuff, because your post grad job search can start pretty quickly and you need to have all of your stuff in order.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and the best time to update things like this is when you're doing it. I had someone suggest once to me that every time I had a job, I had a spreadsheet

and I wrote down exactly what I was doing, what cases I worked on, what the outcomes were, what my work was, because the reality is, if you go back in a few years, you're not going to remember what you did in your summer associate job exactly. But you want to have that list of things that you can be like, "Oh, I did this, I did this, and I did this. And these are the most relevant things for this job I'm applying for, so I'm going to update my resume." But I would really encourage people to think about doing that. Did I actually do that? No, but I did think in retrospect, it would have been a really good piece of advice to follow.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Also, it can be good to reach out to whoever was your supervisor between 1L and 2L year, who may still need to be a reference for you. Maybe go grab a cup of coffee or a Zoom date, just to catch up, because if somebody does call them for a reference, you want to be fresh in their minds. So, don't let those relationships get stale. That's part of your job hunt as well.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and if you think you're applying for clerkships, they will call. So, a lot of judges will call your references. It's not like when you submit them to other types of jobs and it's a formality; maybe they don't really ever reach out. A lot of judges, because it's such a personal relationship, do want to talk to the people that you have listed as recommenders. So, you need to be sure that you're in touch with those people.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, tip number eight – recharge mentally and physically, which is totally not what I did that summer, but I think it's a great idea, because the summer can be a grind, law school can be a grind, so if you can make time for hobbies, maybe a trip, see family, do some relaxation. Maybe you'll get a week or so off between your job and school. The last year comes with its own stresses and challenges, and then you have to dive right into the bar exam. So, you have a pretty big haul to finish everything that you need to finish, so take some opportunities for a little R&R.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. Even in the whole craziness – I was still in New York City – I would go out on a Friday night, maybe I'd go to the Met and they have a special thing where you can go up to the roof and it's fun. Even if it's a few hours, I think definitely trying to fit in something that's not just work, is a great idea, because you are, again, starting to transition out of the student phase into more of an adult sort of relationship with the world, where you're working. Obviously, you probably still don't have a ton of money necessarily. You don't want to spend everything that you're earning in your summer job going out to the bars. But you can certainly take a little bit of time and money and do something fun.

Lee Burgess: That's true. Alright, tip number nine is, if you're still unsure what kind of law you want to practice, it's time to start doing informational interviews. You've got to start meeting with people. So, meeting people, we talked about going to networking events, but really trying to figure out what you might want to do after graduation. If you feel like you need to change course, this is a great time to do that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. And I think you're probably in an environment where you're around other attorneys, even if it's people that you're working with. Particularly if you're at a firm, you have a ton of people that you could talk to about their practice areas, and these people want to take you to lunch, they want to take you to coffee or ice cream or whatever. And I think, use that. Use that to your advantage. You can also potentially take some different types of assignments that maybe aren't exactly up your alley to try to figure this out. But it is the last chance to really just explore and figure things out without having it hanging over you that you need to have a job.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's really true. And it can be fun. Learning about what people do is fun. So, you never know who you will meet. It could be enjoyable too. It's not all just work.

Alison Monahan: Right. When you have all these networking opportunities, even just like, "Hey, what does a day in your life look like?" – different lawyers are going to answer that totally differently.

Lee Burgess: Totally.

Alison Monahan: Or, "What's your favorite part of this practice area? What do you find challenging about it?" These are not hard questions.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, tip number 10 is to write a law school bucket list for yourself. So, this is likely the last time you're going to be a full-time student, if you're a full-time law student. So, what do you want to do now that you're not going to have time to do when you have your full-time legal job? Like go to Trader Joe's at 10:00 AM on a weekday.

Alison Monahan: I bet the lines are not nearly as bad as they are in the evenings and on weekends.

Lee Burgess: That of my favorite things to do when I was in law school, was to go to Trader Joe's at 10:00 AM on a weekday. Going to yoga at noon, jogging in the park, having flexibility. The school schedule often is more flexible, and your class schedule may look very different your 3L year. You likely have more seminars, your classes may be bundled, you may not even be on campus every day. So, you might have a lot of flexibility to do interesting things. And when you go have that nine to whatever job that you may end up getting, you lose a lot of that flexibility until you go to work for yourself, if that's what you want to do. But I think it's time to enjoy it and savor the good parts of being a student – having access to the health care or the health spa and the gym and all that stuff that comes with being at a university. Taking crazy classes for no money because you're a student. There are lots of things that you can do as a student that you won't get to do anymore. So, lean into it. It'll be fun.

Alison Monahan: And I think it's a great time to think about other classes you want to take in other departments that you have access to at this university that you might be at. I took a class in the Architecture school because I'm a I did a master's in Architecture. And we read a book and that professor is actually teaching in the Architecture school where I was in law school. So, I took this class and it was amazing. I just took some other seminars that at the time seemed wacky, but have actually fundamentally influenced the way that I look at the world. I think they describe a lot of what's going on in the current political climate and why. And these are classes that, from the syllabus or just looking at the description, most people would be like, "Wow, this sounds totally ridiculous." But it was fundamentally life-altering in the way that I view the world.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I took some amazing classes 3L year. I took a class called Bioethics, which we actually started calling "Death and Dying". But it also has really influenced my thoughts on constitutional law, and personal freedom, and healthcare choices. I wrote my writing requirements on access to physician-assisted suicide. I think there are some of these classes that really do just resonate with you. And that was not an area of the law that I thought I had interest in practicing, I found really interesting. But being able to get immersed in some of the modern applications of this law that we've been studying year over year, can just really change how you see the world, change how you see the law, and spark interest in future things you may want to practice.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I took some family law classes. One of them was a seminar on federalism and the family, which at the time seemed like, "Oh, this is really esoteric." Now you think, "Not so much." Actually, yeah, it was a cutting edge class. So, you just never know. I took Federal Indian Law, because I had touched on that when I was a summer as a 2L. And again, super interesting stuff. I think it's a time to

explore those interests, even if you're not thinking you're going to practice, and then just out of intellectual curiosity, because you don't know where they're going to lead you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think it's fun. So you can have some fun. Just have a little fun. Even if it's intellectual, geeky fun. It's okay.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you're in law school. It's fine.

Lee Burgess: You're in law school. It's fine.

Alison Monahan: You're probably a geek. We all are. It's fine.

Lee Burgess: I know. I know.

Alison Monahan: We can admit it. We all like learning things.

Lee Burgess: We do, yeah. So, when I go back to my 3L year, I actually had a pretty positive 3L year. I remember it fondly. I took some fun classes. I enjoyed being a student. I think of it fondly. What about your 3L year?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think so. I spent a lot of time traveling between New York and Boston on the train, because I had friends there, for the weekend or whatnot. I think I had class like three days a week, which I did on purpose.

Lee Burgess: Because you had flexibility.

Alison Monahan: Because I had flexibility and I was like, "Oh, I would like to have a nice long weekend." And it's not that I didn't do work, but it's just a more relaxed sort of schedule, I think, particularly if you're not on the Law Review board or doing serious moot court. Those are also choices you can make, but I chose to be…

Lee Burgess: I did spend a lot of time doing that. I forgot about that. I blocked that out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. See, I chose not to lean into the Law Review, and instead to lean into free time.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I was like, "Wait a minute. I was editing Law Review articles constantly. That's what I was doing my 3L year."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, no, I didn't do that. I was the alumni chair, which meant I planned a fancy banquet and that was it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, the husband who I met that summer, I used to get up early and edit secretly in the apartment before he would wake up, so he wouldn't know that I was spending my Saturday morning editing documents. This story is not surprising to him now, having been with me for years and years.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you were trying to be chill.

Lee Burgess: I was trying be very chill. Very, very chill.

Alison Monahan: None of this is making me feel sad about my choice not to opt in to be on the Law Review board. But you've got to know yourself.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, you've got to know yourself. Alright, well, with that, I think we are out of time. Thanks for joining us today.

Alison Monahan: Thanks, everybody.

Lee Burgess: If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We'd really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website contact form at LawSchoolToolBox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

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Podcast Episode 322: Keeping Motivation Strong Throughout Your 3L Year
Bar Exam Toolbox Podcast Episode 259: How to Minimize Borrowing for the Bar Exam (w/Jesse Mecham from YNAB)
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[My Busies Summer Yet – A Rising 3L Perspective]
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