

## Innovative Pipeline Program Transforms Rejected Applicants into Law Students, Bolstering Diversity in Legal Education



As the legal community ushers in a new academic year, a groundbreaking pipeline initiative has garnered attention for its success in offering a second chance to aspiring law students who were previously rejected. The program, known as LexPostBacc, defies convention by not only preparing underrepresented candidates for the challenges of legal education but also guaranteeing them a coveted spot in law school upon completion.

In a climate where racial diversity in legal academia remains a pressing concern, LexPostBacc stands out as a beacon of hope. Out of approximately 38,000 first-year law students nationwide embarking on their legal studies this month, 51 individuals who had faced rejection two years prior are now part of this trailblazing initiative. Spearheaded by 22 law schools across the United States, LexPostBacc offers these prospective lawyers a year-long intensive program to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in law school. Notably, the program's commitment to admitting participants after completion sets it apart from other pipeline programs.

Of the inaugural cohort comprising 78 participants, an impressive 54 successfully fulfilled the program's requirements. Astonishingly, all but three of these accomplished individuals have chosen to commence their legal education this fall, marking a remarkable 69% completion rate. Chris Chapman, President of AccessLex Institute, the nonprofit organization responsible for funding and administering LexPostBacc, expressed satisfaction with the program's inaugural year. He emphasized that the overarching goal is to transform students from "admission adjacent" to "admission eligible."

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Among the participating institutions in this innovative program are Michigan State University College of Law, Florida International University College of Law, and Pepperdine University Caruso School of Law. The success of LexPostBacc's pilot year is particularly noteworthy in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision to prohibit race-conscious admissions in higher education institutions. Concerns have been raised within the legal education sphere about the potential impact of this decision on efforts to enhance diversity among law students and the broader legal profession. Chapman sees LexPostBacc as a means to counteract these challenges and envisions its growth as an inspiration for other schools to initiate similar initiatives.

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Central to LexPostBacc's mission is its aim to diversify the pool of law school applicants. By offering a safety net for candidates whose academic credentials, such as Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores and undergraduate grade-point averages, place them near or at the lower end of admission cutoffs, the program seeks to broaden the spectrum of students entering law school. Eligibility for LexPostBacc is extended to candidates from underrepresented racial groups, first-generation college graduates, and recipients of need-based federal Pell Grants during their undergraduate studies. Additionally, applicants must have scored within the bottom 25% of LSAT takers nationwide, a criterion that recognizes the inequities and biases often embedded in standardized testing systems.

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The program's inaugural cohort was notably diverse, with 94% of participants identifying as people of color. According to Chapman, this commitment to inclusion persists in the second cohort of 91 aspiring lawyers. The program structure involves a rigorous 10 to 11 months of online classes, demanding approximately 10 hours of weekly commitment from participants. Successful completion of the program secures them not only admission to their referring law school but also a 20% scholarship. Beyond academic support, each participant receives a \$3,000 stipend, along with access to a complimentary bar review program courtesy of AccessLex.

In an era where equitable representation remains a critical goal within legal education, LexPostBacc emerges as a transformative force. By providing rejected applicants with a unique opportunity to refine their skills and secure a place in law school, this pioneering program fosters academic growth and actively contributes to a more diverse and inclusive legal community. As the legal landscape continues to evolve, LexPostBacc's impact promises to resonate far beyond its initial cohorts, setting a precedent for a more accessible and representative future in legal education.

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