



Academic Positions

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Yes... you **can** be a college professor if you are already a lawyer. Your law degree provides you entry into academic life beyond just the teaching of law. Your degree provides you with sufficient academic stature to teach almost any subject in which you have a background.

To outline the more obvious possibilities available, you can teach legal ethics, legal history, or any other law-related subject. But that's just for starters. Should you possess an undergraduate and/or master's degree in a subject other than law, there is no reason you cannot teach that as well. If you have developed an expertise, say, in 19th Century Naval History, or Medieval Church Architecture, you may find yourself and your subject welcome at some university near you. In fact, many lawyers are teaching subjects other than the law right now. Many are found teaching at four-year institutions as well as at community colleges or paralegal institutes. Other lawyers have quit the law to teach full time.

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Part of any difficulty you may have envisioning yourself as a professor is the built-in intimidation factor. This requires a little more explanation. Let's start with your former law professors. Many of them were no doubt intimidating. There is the tendency, especially among first-years, to idealize as well as fear them. Their learnedness is assumed. They symbolically embody not only the highest intellectual traditions of the legal profession, but the prestige of the university in which they teach. They serve as intellectual high priests and cultural guardians. Because of law professors' exalted social rank, it is falsely assumed that becoming one is beyond the reach of 95% of practicing attorneys.

This same intimidation factor works with professors who possess a Ph.D. They have gone through years of graduate course work, 20-some hours of qualifying exams, and then must write a book-length manuscript to become certified. Like lawyers, once they begin teaching, they magically become experts in their field, and ordinary citizens are reluctant to challenge them. This intimidation factor is founded on a series of myths, several of which are outlined below.



Legal Myth

LEGAL AUTHORITY

You cannot become a professor unless you are a top student.

What is not generally known, even among attorneys, is that the foregoing profile does not fit the majority of professors at the majority of law schools. In reality, you do not have to be brilliant to teach. You do need to understand your subject thoroughly, hopefully due to hands-on experience, but you don't have to be a top graduate from Harvard or the University of Chicago to get a job. Facts are, the majority of professors were good students, but many of them did not finish at the top of their classes. They became professors because they focused and applied themselves and persevered. Not only that, there are professors, even at well-known colleges, who have only a master's degree and no doctorate or have finished doctoral studies, but never completed their dissertation.

Professors are dropouts from the commercial world.

Regarding professors, there is the myth that they are men and women who could not stand up to the stress or the pace of law firm or corporate work. This is simply not true. Life as a professor offers many attractions having nothing to do with money. Most teaching jobs, for instance, do not pay as much as in-house or law firm attorney positions; however, the academic life can be infinitely more rewarding in a variety of ways. As earlier mentioned, you gain enhanced stature in the eyes of the public. You have the opportunity to impart your wisdom to the next generation. In addition, you gain numerous vacation days and may even get summers off. Many universities still offer sabbaticals at full or reduced pay every seven years or so. Do you secretly yearn to publish your observations and beliefs? A career as a professor encourages and rewards such writing.

It is impossible to find a position as a professor.

The commonly held perception is that if one thinks it is difficult finding an advertised position in a law firm or corporation, it is even more difficult to find an advertised position for a college professor or any other kind of professor. In particular, it is believed that the academic profession has its own hiring rituals and tends to get this job done by word of mouth. And because most positions are unadvertised, they will be offered to others who are wired into a mysterious professor network. In fact, there are thousands of teaching positions, and many of them are filled each year in a way you might not have imagined.



Are You an Attorney? Then You Can Be a Professor. Being an attorney is the basic requirement. Your law degree certifies that you have successfully completed graduate work. Do you possess in-depth, hands-on knowledge of a specific area of the law? Great. That makes you even more attractive to almost any law school. Do you possess in-depth, hands-on experience in a subject other than the law? Great. That knowledge, plus the law degree, makes you attractive to almost any university. It is worth emphasizing again: A great many professors, whether in the law or teaching another discipline, were not exceptional students. Truth is, many schools will not even request a transcript before they interview you. So stop worrying about what you may perceive as daunting prerequisites.

Okay. I'm Interested. How Do I Get a Job As a Professor? Good question. There may be hundreds of positions available in any large metropolitan area, but you would be surprised as to how they are filled. Here's a little-known secret: Many, if not most, of these jobs are filled simply because the school receives an inquiry from an interested applicant. For instance, small colleges may hope to find somebody locally to teach a course or two at night. They may not advertise this job. You must be proactive to find these opportunities.

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So What Do I do? What's the best way to go about my search for a teaching position? Use Legal Authority. It's as simple as that. Legal Authority contains a database of teaching contacts unduplicated elsewhere. If you seek a teaching job anywhere in the continental U.S.A., let us know. One of our counselors will discuss with you those areas of the country where you prefer to work, the type of expertise you offer, and the number of schools with potential openings available in these areas. It's not any more difficult than that. If you can get a resume in front of the dean of every college meeting your interests, you will find every possible opportunity.

Questions about academic jobs? Contact Legal Authority at 800-283-3860 today.