

Dear Almost-1L,

On behalf of the Student Bar Association—or SBA to the acronym-happy NU crowd—welcome to Northwestern University School of Law. My name is Kate, and I'm the President of the SBA as well as a particularly enthusiastic member of our community. The first couple of weeks can be pretty hectic and a little scary (or not, could just have been me), so I'd like to tell you about some of the things we do outside of class before you're buried in syllabi and casebooks.

The SBA is the student government of the law school, just like in high school and college, except that it is arguably less nerdy. The SBA devotes its time to helping students and student groups; basically, we're here to try to fix problems. We hold bi-weekly meetings where students can ask questions, voice concerns, or just stay updated on what the SBA is working on. Of course, you can always email us any questions or concerns (compliments would be acceptable too) you may have as well.

We also host monthly social events including: a beginning-of-the-year party, a tailgate for Northwestern's Homecoming, a Final Four Game Watch, and (my personal favorite) an end-of-year Boat Cruise around Lake Michigan. If you can't wait that long, the SBA's Social Committee also hosts weekly "Bar Reviews" so that you can get to know your classmates and the fantastic (and cheap) Chicago bar scene. The SBA is also the umbrella for a baker's dozen of committees, such as the Social Committee, Admissions Committee, and the Academic Affairs Committee. Getting involved with a SBA Committee is a great way to meet people outside your section, get involved with the school and even have some fun. Another way to get involved is to join one of the 40+ student groups on campus like the Federalist Society, Amnesty International, American Constitution Society, Student Funded Public Interest Fellowships (SFPIF), or the Intellectual Property Law Society (IPLS). If you're the sportier type (not completely unheard of at law school despite what you may have been led to believe), there are intramural basketball and soccer teams to join as well.

In case you still need more excuses to hang out with your classmates, look out for the two big SFPIF events—the SFPIF Auction and, of course, Barrister's Ball—where students raise money to fund public interest legal work for 1L and 2L summers. At the Auction you can unload some of that excess loan money to bid on trips, meals with judges and professors, or even an hour of playtime with a classmate's puppy. Barrister's Ball (or Law Prom) is a great chance to re-live the glories of high school prom without the chaperones.

Of course, one of Northwestern's greatest assets (apart from its students) is Chicago. To those of you who are new to the city, make sure to take advantage of one of the most vibrant cities in the U.S. Chicago is home to some of the world's most renowned architecture, restaurants, art and music scenes. It's also just an incredibly fun place to live—so long as you invest in a really warm coat. So get bleacher seats at Wrigley, see the rising comedy stars at Second City, hang with the hipsters in Wicker Park, and grab a hot dog (absolutely no ketchup) at Hot Doug's.

I speak for the entire SBA Executive Board when I say that we look forward to meeting you in August. I'm joined by: Mike Lehrman, Vice President; Evan Elsner, Secretary; and Julie Lee, Treasurer. Please feel free to look for us at Orientation (we love the attention), and I also apologize for what I now realize is a staggering over-use of parentheticals.

Get excited,

Kate Riordan
JD-LLM in International Human Rights, 2013