

Since the 1980s, law school tuition has risen dramatically. As a result, by early 2013, the average law school graduate could expect to graduate with debt near or exceeding \$100,000, not including any debt accumulated during his or her undergraduate endeavors. Like many aspects of the legal profession, the Character and Fitness assessment, required by state bar boards of admission, has not evolved to reflect current economic and social trends, as student loans are an integral and necessary resource used by many to attend law school. Due to the increasing costs and grim financial prospects associated with the pursuit of a law degree, reform is necessary in each state's perception of student debt as a factor in a Character and Fitness assessment, specifically the applicant's financial irresponsibility determination. This article will evaluate the bar admissions process, with a specific focus on the Character and Fitness assessment and the considerations that are taken into account by a Character and Fitness Committee before it issues a finding of financial irresponsibility. It will also examine the Loan Repayment Assistance Programs (LRAP) that are in place at the state, federal, and law school level and will argue that these programs are insufficient to address the large amounts of debt law that graduates can accumulate while pursuing a law degree. This article will further discuss whether a legal education is a wise investment, as well as analyze the various class action suits against law schools for their alleged misrepresentations of employment and salary data. Finally, this article will consider possible reforms that bar admissions boards should adopt to treat student loan debt separately from a determination of financial irresponsibility that adapts to meet the demands of twenty-first century lawyers.