



FROM THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR - KATHLEEN STEWART

That over a year has passed since I wrote about surviving the world going into a shutdown is incredible to me. Over-one-year. And here we are, poised to continue our educational journey fully remote for the fall...again.

It's hard to take in all of the impacts, both positive and negative, that the pandemic has brought upon our homes and institutions but that is exactly what we are all doing: taking it in and trying to continue to move forward as best we can.

As we met with Program Advisory Committee members over the past year, we learned that many things the legal world was convinced could not be done, could in fact be done! This may be one of the most positive impacts of the pandemic on the legal field. It means the potential for increased flexibility in the work day, reduced commute times, access to talent outside of the geographic limitations of wherever a practice is located, and cost savings across the system...for those firms and agencies ready to make the change more permanent. Others remain committed to returning to the pre-pandemic model. Whatever the outcome, the legal landscape is forever changed and students experiencing their education at this time are forever changed as well.

As we interacted with students, new and returning alike, we learned that remote access created a very mixed bag of wins and losses. Like the work world, there was no denying the convenience of remote learning and the cost savings for some – commuting, housing, parking!! Our new way of doing some things will survive long after the threats of the pandemic have passed and we have returned to our campus because they are great new ways to do things!

But there was also no denying the challenges of isolation, motivation, and technology for others. These challenges have been evident in every aspect of our communities. A post-secondary education marks a 'coming of age' period of time for many students; the loss of social connection, living independently for the first time, having fun in the hallways, sitting down with a teacher in their office for a heart-to-heart – these losses were felt deeply. As a professor (a chatty, social professor), I felt it deeply too. I long to be back in the classroom making connections with my students – something that is extremely challenging when staring into a monitor with only chat text appearing in response.

We would be remiss if we did not extend our thanks to all of the field placement agencies who rose to the challenge and hosted our students either virtually, in-person, or in a hybrid format and to Trevor Greenall, who provided amazing support from the college to cultivate and promote these opportunities for our students.

We are hopeful that whatever our new normal is, it successfully blends the wins from the remote experience, with the wins of the in-person experience and leaves us all better off in the end.

Kathleen Stewart

2021 LEGAL CAREER PREPARATION AWARD WINNERS

Normally, bake sales abound on campus each year as students work to raise funds for this award – a tradition that has existed for well over a decade now. I'm happy to report that in spite of the pandemic, we had sufficient funds to grant this award because of the hard work of previous year's students.

This year, in addition to the criteria noted below, we asked applicants to speak to their resilience in the face of the pandemic and to describe their ability to accept and adapt to the remote environment while maintaining a high degree of professionalism. We had a record number of applicants!

AWARD CRITERIA

Full-time students in the final semester of the program who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher are eligible to apply for the bursary known as the Legal Career Preparation Award. Unlike many bursaries that have financial need as the primary requirement, this award recognizes students who demonstrate strong employability skills throughout their time at Durham College.

Recipients of this award have successfully demonstrated the following:

1. A strong commitment to their education as evidenced by regular attendance and active, quality participation in class.
2. Essential employability skills including strong written and verbal communication skills, an ability to meet deadlines while producing quality work, consistently demonstrating initiative and a high degree of professionalism.
3. Strong interpersonal skills including the ability to work collaboratively with others in a positive and productive manner, the ability to adapt to change, resolve conflict, and solve problems in a team environment.

SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

Legal Reflections is published annually in June. If you would like to make a submission, please contact Kathleen Stewart, Program Coordinator at Kathleen.Stewart@durhamcollege.ca.

Submissions could include:

- alumni profiles
- trends in the legal field
- changes in the legal field
- new legislation impacts
- any topic that might be of interest to alumni



CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENTS!

EMMA FOWLER – Emma accepted a position with Aird & Berlis LLP.

MELISSA O'CALLAGHAN – Melissa accepted a position at Thomas Efraim LLP.

TABITHA NESBITT – Tabitha accepted a position with Ross Nasseri LLP.



EMMA FOWLER



MELISSA O'CALLAGHAN



TABITHA NESBITT



GOING VIRTUAL — THE 2021 LAW CLERK NETWORKING EVENT

Several years ago, a long-standing event, the law clerk career fair, was remodeled into a networking event. Instead of static displays with groups of students moving from display to display, the event became a boisterous and interactive gathering.

At the time, I told people, “think of it as speed dating only for talent recruitment”. The new format was fast, furious, and fun! In spite of the trepidation students felt, they plunged headlong into the experience, survived, and loved it! It helped build confidence and develop conversational skills, and it helped them see employers as approachable and accessible.

That was six years ago! Fast-forward a few years and as we were poised to put another group of students through their paces, we were hit with a world-wide pandemic two weeks before the event. We all know what happened next: the world closed its doors. With no event in 2020 and the pandemic wearing on through 2020 and 2021, a decision had to be made — go virtual or do nothing.

We opted for virtual, settled on Microsoft TEAMS as our platform and gathered around our computers in March. The event tested everyone’s skills and abilities and though I am an organizational zealot, no amount of planning and organizing can ever ensure a problem-free event. Thankfully, we had an amazing group of patient employers and students who dealt with issues as they arose and persevered.

Many thanks to our participating firms and agencies:

Cynthia Kelly	Aird & Berlis
Kathy Anderson & Kristin Hamilton	Bennett Jones
Kayla Manley	Blaney McMurtry
Karen Keane & France Dupont	Davies, Ward, Phillips & Vineberg
Alexis Fitzjohn & Natasha Bogdanovic	Fasken
Rebecca Knight, Ajay Maudhoo	MPAC
Grant Telfer, Alyssa Sarkis, Ryan Rahikka & Robert Toutant	Stikeman Elliott
Rita Kapoor, Ela Hatam, & Caroline Middleton-Trimmm	

Congratulations to the students who secured full-time employment as a result of the event. Though we all made it through, everyone agreed that the in-person format was preferable and we sincerely hope the world’s doors are wide open in March 2022.

DURHAM’S CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE IS HERE FOR YOU!

As businesses cope with the financial challenges brought on by the pandemic through layoffs, wage reductions and hiring freezes, it is important now more than ever for graduates to access career supports and call upon skills and strategies developed in the Law Clerk Advanced program!

An oft overlooked FREE resource to students, alumni and employers alike is Durham College’s Hired portal. This web site offers so much more than job postings!

Students & Graduates – Log in to the site and book a Career Development appointment for

- Career coaching
- Cover letter, resume, and interview support
- LinkedIn profiles, networking and digital brand development
- Virtual mock interviews

In addition, there are numerous workshops you can attend virtually right now. Once you log in to the site, check out the Events/Workshops calendar for great sessions.

EMPLOYERS

Registering for a free account allows you to self-manage job postings and target specific program graduates. What are you waiting for?

WANTED: CO-OP EMPLOYERS

Work integrated learning (WIL) takes many forms and in the Law Clerk Advanced program, students can choose between field placement and co-op. What’s the difference?

TIMING:

Field Placements take place during the course of the standard school year – September to April while Co-op work terms take place in the spring/summer between each school year.

LENGTH:

There are three field placements of 70 hours, 140 hours and 140 hours (350 hours in total) while there are two Co-op work terms of 420 hours each.

REMUNERATION:

Field Placements are not typically paid, though some employers choose to do this while Co-ops are paid positions and Co-op hosts may be eligible to apply for a provincial tax credit of up to \$3,000.

The Co-op program is new looking to build a complement of firms and agencies eager to take on students of the Law Clerk Advanced program.

If your firm or agency is interested in finding out more, please contact:

Anna De Grauwe, Cooperative Education Coordinator

Anna.Degrauwe@durhamcollege.ca

Experiential Learning Office

AN INTERVIEW WITH: MARIE SFORZA

After 10 years with Durham College, Marie announced in the spring that she would be leaving. She will be missed by students and faculty alike! Marie was kind enough to share a few thoughts with me.

Q: WHAT YEAR DID YOU START WITH THE COLLEGE?

A: 2011 – I didn't realize it's been 10 years!

Q: WHAT PROGRAMS HAVE YOU TAUGHT IN OVER THE YEARS?

A: Law Clerk Advanced and Fast Track programs, Office Administration – Legal, and Paralegal. I was also the Program Coordinator for Fire and Life Safety for two years.

Q: WHAT COURSES HAVE YOU TAUGHT?

A: PC Law/legal accounting, Real Estate Fundamentals, Real Estate File Management, Automated Law Documentation.

Q: WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT TEACHING?

A: I always loved my interaction with students. I learned so much from all of my students and have become a better person from this experience. I have learned that in spite of all obstacles, students are resilient and can overcome many hurdles. They have taught me that each day you face challenges and turn those challenges into success. I still keep in touch with many of my former students and love to hear their successes. My most successful story is of a student who came to the college for one year in the law clerk program and went on to get his university degree before entering law school. When he graduated law school, he sent me a note saying, "I will never forget your words of wisdom and encouragement. You told me I demonstrated skills that would make me an excellent lawyer. I wanted you to know that today I graduated law school and have a position at a law firm in Toronto. I owe my success to you". It is this type of story which made my position at Durham teaching not only enjoyable but fulfilling. I think of students as my own children. They need encouragement to drive them forward.

Q: DO ANY MEMORABLE MOMENTS COME TO MIND?

A: Like the time I walked into a classroom in my second semester, put up my PowerPoint presentation and started explaining why you need a will and how important a will is. About 15 minutes in, one of the students puts up his hand and says, "this is very interesting but this is chemistry so I believe you must be in the wrong class". All the while I had another professor standing by the door giving me the evil eye. I collected my things and walked out. I was so embarrassed but such is life!

Q: WHAT PLANS DO YOU HAVE AS YOU LEAVE THE COLLEGE?

A: I am working three days a week at Woitzik Polsinelli Lawyers and Mediators now instead of two and the rest of my week will be filled with wedding plans - both my boys are getting married so I have a lot of work to do! I want to start taking it easy. Life goes by quickly and when this pandemic is over I would like to start travelling again.

We wish you all the best Marie. Thank you for all you have done for the students over the years.

Law Clerk Advanced Program Team



SETTING HER SIGHTS ON NEW ADVENTURES, VIRGINIA HARWOOD RETIRES

Life is full of bittersweet moments. For me, saying good-bye to Virginia after 18 years, both as a valued member of the Law Clerk Advanced faculty team and my office mate for several years, is one such moment.

Many of you will recall taking your family law and litigation courses with Virginia and over the years, she developed and delivered many others including ethics, mediation, and wills and estates. The quality of learning experiences in her classroom was evident in the comments from field placement supervisors who spoke often of how well-prepared students were. Never one to be a 'chalk and talk' professor, anyone passing by her classrooms often saw students up, moving around and engaging with each other and the course content in fun and different ways. During her time at the college, she was active on our Program Advisory Committee, served as a faculty mentor, sat on the Research Ethics Board and contributed to many other college committees and projects.

Virginia's strong connection to the Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario (ILCO) made her a conference regular as both a presenter and a participant. Her thirst for learning and creating quality experiences for students was evident in everything that she did.

In addition to being a faculty member, Virginia assumed a position as an Associate Dean for the School of Interdisciplinary Studies and worked in the Centre for Academic Faculty Enrichment (CAFÉ) supporting the development of new faculty.

The Alumni Mentoring Program (AMP) imagined by her and developed in concert with the Alumni Association is a wonderful legacy. Law Clerk Advanced students were the first to experience the program which is heading into its fourth year and has been extended to other programs across the college.

Other faculty will agree that we will also miss her amazing baking! We were treated to delicious treats at many program team meetings - yet another drawback of the remote environment...no baked goods at meetings.

No doubt Virginia is already planning her next project and adventure. We wish her all the best and want you to know Virginia, that there is a standing invitation to drop by with baked goods any time!



ALUMNI PROFILE — KATIE BELL

When I walked into my very first Law Clerk Advanced class at Durham College as a mature student, I was apprehensive. Now, nearly a decade later, I know that deciding to return to post-secondary studies is one of the best decisions I have ever made. Even years later, Durham College continues to enable me to open doors that I never dreamed myself capable of opening.

Throughout my time in the program, I put my everything into every course; I wanted to learn as much as I could. I also wanted to make the most of my time at Durham and so, in addition to focusing on my studies, I became involved with the Program Advisory Committee and Law Clerk Advanced Sub-Society to help give back to and evolve the program.

As a result of this hard work and commitment, I secured a job at Aird & Berlis LLP as an estates litigation legal assistant before I graduated from the college in 2014.

I was thrilled to be working in the legal field and Durham College had me well-prepared to succeed in my new role. In less than three years I grew in my career, becoming a law clerk. The lawyers I worked with were instrumental in helping me to develop my skills as a clerk and they encouraged me to take on increasingly complex files. I also came to discover that I was truly passionate about working with vulnerable elderly clients and continually sought out ways to better assist them. So, after a very fulfilling five and a half years with Aird & Berlis—and with the support of those with whom I worked—I made the decision to go back to school and pursue my dream of becoming a lawyer.

In September 2019, I entered the Legal Studies undergraduate program at Ontario Tech University, leveraging my Law Clerk Advanced diploma to gain advanced standing into third year. I am very proud to say that in just a few short weeks I will be graduating with highest distinction. Over the past two years, I have also successfully written the LSAT, held an executive position on the university Student Law Association committee, applied to law school, and am now working as a research assistant.

I was even able to achieve another long-held dream when, coming full circle, I returned to Durham College, and the program that was critical to my own journey, to teach several of the courses that I once took as a student.

When, beyond my wildest expectations, I was recently accepted into law school, I looked back at each challenge, each opportunity, and each choice, thankful. Thankful for the people I met and who encouraged me, beginning with those at Durham College. George Eliot wrote: “It’s never too late to be what you might have been.” What that looks like will be different for each person and is ever-changing; it certainly has been for me. From apprehensive college student to legal assistant. From law clerk to college professor. Now, I am finally realizing my dream of becoming a lawyer as I prepare to attend Queen’s Law in the fall.

If I could offer just one piece of advice to those that want or need to hear it, it would be this: never doubt yourself or your dreams. Life is a journey, and it is within you to make it whatever you want it to be. You just need to take that first step.