

A Lawyer's Landscape

THREE GRADUATES FROM THE CLASS OF 2001 ARE CHARTING THEIR FUTURES WITHOUT THE HELP OF HOW-TO MANUALS, ATLASES OR ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE. THEIR STORIES ILLUSTRATE THAT FOR THOSE WHO HOLD LAW DEGREES, THE PATHS ARE MANY. PATRICIA YOUNG

Graduates from the University of Maryland School of Law are finding that employment opportunities abound—in diverse and sometimes non-traditional areas.

Of the Class of 2001's 237 graduates, 97 percent are either employed, pursuing advanced degrees or are not seeking employment. Sixty-six entered private practice, 43 are judicial law clerks, 32 entered government or other public service, and two are chief operating officers, one for Empower Baltimore Management Corp., another for a health care consulting firm in Virginia.

In the profiles that follow, three members of the Class of 2001 were interviewed as they entered the legal landscape and again seven months later. Their career choices illustrate that a legal education is what you make of it.

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CHANGING LIFESTYLES AND PRIORITIES

Jennifer Emig is one of the 66 graduates who entered private practice, but this may be the only category in which she can be placed. After a three-and-a-half week trip to Europe, this high-energy young woman comes home to a moving van waiting to take her belongings to her next residence (there have been 13 in 10 years). Plus, she is preparing to take the bar exam and completing the transition from full-time student to professional.

Venable, Baetjer & Howard, LLP, is her employer, yet she retains her student status. Emig has two classes to complete to earn her master's degree in business administration (MBA) from the University of Baltimore. She plans to don cap and gown yet again in December 2001.

Is she ready for all that awaits her? Yes and no. "I'm totally not ready. I'm jet lagged—a mad woman," she exclaims while putting lipstick on and speaking on her cell phone in her parked car as she watches the movers load the van. On the flip side, "There is a certain euphoria that comes with graduating and attaining financial independence. All these changes are positive—changing lifestyle and priorities," Emig acknowledges. And she has a relatively new boyfriend to add to the mix.

Her lifestyle will change dramatically. As a new associate practicing corporate transactional work in the health care group, business division at Venable, Emig expects to clock a 10- to 12-hour day. "I originally wanted to do general transactional work, but the market is stagnant," Emig explains. "I had several job offers, but I chose Venable because of its excellent reputation, the collegiality in the firm and their willingness to work with people's schedules and interests."

Her interests are plentiful. An athlete who works out four to five times a week, she is training for a marathon and playing on a women's soccer team. For the past few years, Emig has paired with Pam Shriver on her charity tennis tournament, helping with event planning and promotions. Having once considered a career in public relations, the tennis tournament is one extracurricular activity with which she hopes to stay involved.

FROM TUSCANY TO BALTIMORE TO ERIE

Out of 43 graduates who accepted judicial clerkships, Craig Mason is the only graduate to be selected to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. He applied for the federal clerkship on a whim, "I thought it would be kind of fun," says Mason.

Mason's casual attitude is a direct contrast to the competitive nature of clerking for the Court of Appeals. There are only 11 circuits, thereby making the slots more competitive and prestigious. For approximately every 300 applicants, only one is chosen. Regarding judicial clerkships in general, the School of Law ranks above the national average with 24 percent of the Class of 2001 clerking, while just 12 percent of all law graduates nationwide clerked in 2000.

After graduating from Gettysburg College (Pa.) with a major in English literature, Mason was an officer in the U.S. Army for five years, completing tours of duty in Germany and Tuscany. The military offered him a chance to travel and decide what to do next. "I knew I want-

ed a job that required me to use my mind," Mason explains. He had considered attending law school or becoming a professor.

Mason says his decision to come to Baltimore from Tuscany may be yet another stall tactic. "Attending the School of Law was a part of my gradual process of putting off the ultimate decision," Mason asserts.

Aside from thinking the one-year clerkship for the Hon. Richard Nygaard in Erie, Pa., would be fun, Mason knew it would open a lot of doors for him. The irony isn't lost on him as he states, "This opportunity will probably compound my confusion."

But Mason stands at the ready. With relocating, the bar exam and employment all just a month or less away, he retains his cool composure as he rattles off what he expects out of his 60-hour work week. Mason anticipates traveling to Philadelphia to hear oral arguments about one week out of the month. The remainder of his time will be spent preparing the judge to hear cases, he explains, by writing memoranda and opinions and, "more writing," Mason predicts.

ACHIEVING BALANCE

Some graduates attend law school and earn law degrees, never intending to become practicing attorneys. That is Tisha Edwards: a social worker, a wife and mother of two small children and the chief operating officer (COO) for Empower Baltimore Management Corp.

Edwards entered graduate school as a JD/MSW dual-degree candidate. With a minor in social work from Georgia State University, Edwards was eager to earn an advanced degree (or two). What is typically a four- to five-year program, Edwards conquered in three, "I'm a pretty urgent person," she admits. In spite of having a husband, a young son and a baby on the way at the time, Edwards says, "I felt I could handle something more accelerated."

To fulfill an internship requirement for her graduate studies, Edwards was a research/staff assistant for six months for Empower Baltimore, an organization that works with Baltimore City's empowerment zones (downtown urban revitalization). Upon graduating in May 2001, she was named COO.

Edwards manages the operations of the corporation, its $100 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a $1.3 million administrative budget and a staff of 40. "The work is not so difficult," Edwards says, "it is striking the balance. I want to be the best mom I can be, give 110 percent to work and still find time for myself." Oh, and she is studying for the bar exam.

Edwards is quick to give credit where it is due. "My husband makes this happen. He is there for the kids, for me, and he creates time." Edwards recognizes the value of family. She is the first in her family to hold a degree, let alone three. "This [her JD and MSW] is my mom's and my grandmother's too," she proudly states.

Her COO position with a nonprofit organization places Edwards right where she wants to be. "This is just the right opportunity to propel me toward my long-term goal," Edwards says, working with nonprofits across the city, building the organizations' capacities. Ultimately she would like to have her own consulting firm.

So why earn a law degree? "My law school education is an opportunity for me to leverage what can happen within communities. I'm a social worker with the skills and knowledge of a lawyer," says Edwards.

Graduates are **pursuing their**

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EXPECTATIONS V. REAL WORLD

With a half-year or so into their professional careers, Emig, Mason and Edwards evaluate their current status and those adjustments, be it physical or mental, that require constant vigilance.

Emig, as anticipated, finished her MBA and graduated in December 2001. She passed the bar exam in November, was sworn in on Dec. 11, and was proposed to on Dec. 12. Her proposal made for headline news in *The Baltimore Sun.*

Emig continued her work with Pam Shriver's annual charity tennis tournament and, during the event, Shriver called Emig to center court where her boyfriend met her on bended knee. He presented her with a tennis ball cut in half and when he opened it, there was a diamond ring inside. "I was so shocked," says Emig.

What isn't shocking is her schedule. As expected, she works a 10- to 12-hour day but finds time to play in the firm's basketball league as well as volunteer at local elementary schools. What Emig can't seem to find time to do is the laundry. "The realities of the working world," she laughs, "I miss working out and visiting with my family and friends."

KEEPING OPTIONS OPEN

Mason, prior to his clerkship, predicted he would be writing in abundance—and he is. He spends an incredible amount of time researching. What he didn't anticipate is the amount of focused intellectual energy he expends on reviewing appellate cases. "I have never thought this hard about something," Mason says. "I spend an entire week working on a single case."

Mason is surprised at the variety of cases that he sees. The appellate jurisdiction includes Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, and he reviews *habeas corpus* petitions, federal drug and criminal cases, and civil cases. Judge Nygaard sits every six weeks, and for every sitting, Mason explains, there are 12 cases.

Since Mason has completed more than half of his clerkship, his next move may be to Washington, D.C., and the large law firm of Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering. (Yes, he passed the bar exam.) Mason says his caseload would be "across the board," again giving him that multi-faceted edge. "I will probably litigate, but I'm keeping my options open."

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

In approximately six months, Edwards may not have a job with Empower Baltimore. She knew her COO position would be phased out at the end of 2002. This only further ignites her passion for using her skills in a non-legal capacity for nonprofit organizations, Edwards affirms.

A position may end, but the journey continues. Her quest to strike a balance between family and career is a bit more harried when studying for the bar exam, again. "There are various benchmarks in determining professional success," Edwards notes. "Passing the bar is a personal goal, I'm not dependent upon it for my livelihood," she says. "I like to think outside of the box. Having a law degree does not equal being a trial attorney or corporate attorney. It is hard to not do what everyone else is doing, but you have to hold onto your dreams and think creatively about what it means to be an attorney."

Graduates are pursuing their dreams in a variety of places and in a variety of positions and, in doing so, are spreading the name and reputation of the University of Maryland School of Law far and wide. Holding a law degree, they are discovering, is only as limiting as their own imaginations. ■

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