Mr. Trynosky Goes to Washington: '06 JD/MPH Grad Selected as A Presidential Management Fellow

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Trynosky was introduced to the Presidential Management Fellowship program in summer 2004 when he was a public health law fellow at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The program was created by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 and modernized in 2003 under President Bush, who said, “The purpose of the program is to attract to the federal service outstanding men and women from a variety of academic disciplines and career paths who have a clear interest in, and commitment to, excellence in the leadership and management of public policies and programs.” It is administered by the federal Office of Personnel Management.

The selection process involved a nomination by UB Law School Dean Nils Olsen, then an all-day assessment in Washington that came in three parts: a five-minute oral presentation on a random topic with just 25 minutes to prepare the speech; a focus group in which judges observed the interaction among four nominees; and a 45-minute writing test, with only a dictionary as a resource.

Trynosky, 30, says the “uniqueness of UB’s JD/MPH program” drew attention during the selection process: “Everyone kept saying, ‘Wow, what a neat combination of degrees.’” He is one of only two people from State University of New York schools chosen for the 2006 program.

In considering what field they will pursue during the two-year appointment, Presidential Management Fellows interview with government agencies in areas that interest them. Trynosky has accepted a position as an Assistant Director for Legislative Affairs with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. He is currently responsible for the legislative portfolio containing issues related to The Office of the Chief Medical Officer, bioterrorism, pandemic preparedness and agroterrorism.

When the fellowship ends, appointees can accept another job in federal government at an advanced level – GS-14, the second-highest level of government civil service. But most, Trynosky says, take the contacts they have made and go on to work in private practice, another level of government or a non-governmental organization. “It has benefits no matter what you plan on doing,” he says.

“Government service is in my blood,” says Trynosky, who before law school served as medical service officer for the Army’s 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, N.Y., leading a platoon of 26 combat medics. His father is a retired urban planner with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development; his mother is an early childhood teacher in Brooklyn.

Having seen the work that goes on in health-related federal agencies, Trynosky says, it is clear to him that “the skills that UB is imparting in its JD/MPH students are exactly what is up and coming in this field. It is the perfect blend of legal background and policy background as well. Even if you are not directly working in health care, a lot of policy issues directly translate into defense or other issues.”
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— Stephen K. Trynosky