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The Class of 2010: Hearing Some of the 246 Unique Stories

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Law School Report

ADMISSIONS

The Class of 2010

Hearing some of the 246 unique stories

Statistics tell a lot about UB Law School's new first-year class, but behind the numbers lie 246 individual stories of students who bring a wealth of diversity, talent and experience to O'Brian Hall. That's the number enrolled in the Class of 2010, out of a pool of 1,518 applications, reports Lillie Wiley-Upshaw, vice dean for admissions and financial aid.

More numbers: 29 percent of the entering class is age 25 or older; 54 percent are male; and 12 percent arrive at UB holding an advanced degree. Their median grade-point average of 3.45 and their median LSAT score of 156 continue to help grow the Law School's reputation as academically selective.

Beyond the statistics, Wiley-Upshaw says, lie a host of "intangible qualities that admissions committees are looking for," such as dedication and persistence. "It takes more than being academically gifted to succeed in life and in law school," she says. "We have realized over time that applicants' ability to reveal those intangibles about themselves is a great predictor of success in law school and beyond.

"The hallmark of our program is that we are able to admit a talented group of people with interesting backgrounds," Wiley-Upshaw says. "What is always unique about our class is that when you dig through the statistics, you find individuals with unique life experiences."

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"In journalism, you learn Associated Press style... But legal style is even more strict and exacting."



Jenny Rizzo has seen some of the world, and a lot of the United States, having worked as on-air talent in television news for six years. A Western New York native and a graduate of Ithaca College, she found she gravitated to crime and courts stories and the chance to interact with victims, judges and lawyers. In 2006 she lived in Germany on a Bosch Foundation fellowship for journalists, reporting for the Ger-

man public radio service Deutsche Welle. She had to learn German to do the job.

"That was an amazing opportunity," Rizzo says, "but I realized I had wanted to be a journalist since I was 12 years old. I was doing exactly what I wanted to do, and I thought, this is really cool—but it is not what I want to do with the next 20 years of my life. I tried to think about what I was interested in. I wanted to be more grounded. As fun as it is to travel around the world, I had been doing that for six years."

So she flew to Munich to take the LSAT, interviewed at UB Law, and joined the Class of 2010. One of her first lessons was about the exactitude of legal writing. "In journalism, you learn Associated Press style," she says. "TV and radio writing are very specific. But legal style is even more strict and exacting. I had some difficulty adjusting to that."

She also has been freelancing for Buffalo's ABC-TV affiliate, WKBW-TV, occasionally. That's important, she says, because she wants to keep open the option of returning to television after law school. "You cannot leave TV for three years," Rizzo says. "You would have to start over. I need to somehow fit this into my life. I think I can marry my two interests and be very happy."

And she keeps those German language skills sharp—going online to watch German news and soap operas.

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“I wanted to know how the system worked so I could help people.”

Mary Schlarb traveled to UB Law from Ithaca, where she was working with international students and faculty at Cornell University, advising them on immigration and visa issues and helping them to get acculturated to American life. Dealing with 3,000 students from 120 countries, she often worked with them on issues involving immigration and tax requirements. Often she had to refer her students to immigration attorneys, and after a while, she said, “I became interested in what these attorneys were doing.”

Next stop: law school. A friend, Mary Idzior '84, director of the Office of Visa Services at Princeton University, recommended UB Law. “She talked about it as being humane – not always a word that you associate with law school,” Schlarb says. “I have never been a person who thrived in a cutthroat environment. I was looking for a place that is more supportive, that inspires you to push yourself.

“I also was attracted to UB for the extern-



ship and clinical programs, particularly in immigration. There are a lot of schools where you can get work with immigrant advocacy organizations, but it will be interesting to see from the government side how they address this. I thought I could get some practical experience that way.”

A Stanford University graduate, Schlarb spent three years in Indonesia working on small-scale economic development projects and teaching English, and then earned a degree in international agriculture and worked in Cornell's Program on Environmental Conflict Management. Through it all, she says, “lawyers had the information and the knowledge. Lawyers were the ones who knew how the system worked. I wanted to know how the system worked, too, so I could help people.”

Her husband, Michael Richardson, is an associate professor of modern languages and literatures at Ithaca College, so they are doing a lot of driving these days.

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“We need to take advantage of the opportunities we have in life.”



Jeremy Richards' initial interest in law school was piqued when he spent two years doing missionary work in Brazil after high school. Graduating from Utah Valley State College, he married at age 22 and deferred his dream of legal education while pursuing a sales career to support his growing family. “The thought of giving up a career I was successful at, moving my family across the country and starting over, was daunting,” he says.

Then personal tragedy intervened: Richards and his wife, Rachel, lost an infant son, their fourth child. For Richards, it was a turning point. “That reopened my eyes to how we need to take advantage of the opportunities we have in life,” he says. “I did not want to look back on my life and say, ‘I really wanted to go to law school and become an attorney, but I did not do it.’ I wanted to set an example for my children and pursue that dream.”

Now he and his family are settled in Amherst, and Richards is thinking about labor and employment law, or maybe international law, as areas of practice. UB Law, he says, is opening his eyes in a lot of ways. “The college I attended in Utah was not diverse, and it had a narrow-minded curriculum,” he says. “It frustrated me, to say the least. I knew that coming East and getting a more open-minded education would help me acquire different views on life, the law and the world. That is one of the main reasons I came here.

“I love law school. It is everything I expected – and then some.”

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“I never envisioned myself as a marathon runner.”

Ed Bartz is an athlete who came to it later in life. Bartz took up running in a serious way several years ago as he approached age 50. He was talked into running the Corporate Challenge race, he says, and “got instantly hooked.” Now he has run five marathons, including New York City and Boston.

“I never envisioned myself as a marathon runner,” he says. “But it has helped me to realize that if you really put your mind to something, you can pretty much accomplish anything you want to do.”

Now, with the demands of law school, he is sticking to half-marathons and 10-mile races. But he still runs four days a week, including a long run on weekends.

A graduate of St. Lawrence University, Bartz had a successful career in investment banking. He worked in the trust department of M&T Bank for seven years, earning an MBA from UB at the same time; spent a like period at Key Bank, where he headed the trust department in the Buffalo office; and from 1990 to 2007 worked for an old-line private investment advisory company in Buffalo, Harold C. Brown & Co., becoming a part-owner of the firm.

But the idea of legal training nagged at him all those years. He had been accepted at the University of Miami Law School right out of college, but “it just seemed like the time was not quite right.”

But “I kept on thinking about the law in the back of my mind,” he says. “And at some point I decided, if I am ever going to do it, now is the time.”

He applied again and was accepted at Miami, and at Penn State. But “the more I looked at UB in terms of the quality of the education, being able to stay here and keep my friends, and the cost, it just made too much sense to stay here as opposed to going elsewhere.”

Now, as the senior member of his section, he has found “a great group of people.”

“It is an awful lot of work,” he says. “I was prepared for it, because you hear these horror stories from your attorney friends over the years, and it really is that much work. It just never ends. From the



time you wake up in the morning until you go to bed at night, if you are not doing it, you are thinking about it. I am even dreaming about it.

“But I am really enjoying it. I thought it would be a bit drier than it has turned out to be. The courses are incredibly interesting.”

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“I grew up with hitting and physical contact. It was hard to make the switch to girls hockey.”

Dina McCumber spent her undergraduate career at Princeton University, and made her mark on the ice as well as in the classroom. As a member of the Princeton Tigers women’s ice hockey team, she put to good use the skating and stick-handling skills she learned growing up playing with the boys on the Wheatfield Blades team. In her junior year at Princeton, her team went to the Final Eight for the first time and also won the Ivy League championship.

In her senior year, she played in all 33 games, led all Tigers defensemen with 24 points (three goals and 21 assists), and was ranked second among league defensemen in scoring. She also was selected to an all-star team that played the U.S. Olympic team in an exhibition game.

NCAA women’s hockey is a no-check game, but McCumber had a difficult time with that. “I grew up with hitting and physical contact,” she says. “It was hard to make the switch to girls hockey.” She notes with perverse pride that she holds an NCAA record for most penalty minutes, in a game against Minnesota.

Having interned with the U.S. attorney’s office in the summer after her junior year, and with a private defense attorneys firm this past summer, she knew that law school was her next step and that UB was the right place. “After being away at Princeton for four years,” she says, “I wanted to come home to my family. And I love the people here. It is a different mentality than Princeton. The Ivy Leagues are pretty intense. The students and the professors here are a little bit more laid-back. They are very willing to help you. It is not as cutthroat here. Everyone is willing to share and help each other out. I really like that.”

And she still straps on the skates, coaching a girls 16-and-under team, playing in men’s “bar leagues” with some of her old hockey buddies, and learning to referee games.

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