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Finding their path to law school

Talented DiscoverLaw grads take their place in the first-year class

Students take all sorts of paths to law school. Here is how two promising first-year students at UB School of Law found their way.

For both Denzel Moore and Arrianna Hart, the path ran through DiscoverLaw, the Law School’s summer intensive program for talented undergraduates of color. In the month-long program, students live on campus and experience an array of Law School classes, as well as coaching in the skills they’ll need to succeed in law school. The goal is to help students decide whether a life in the law is right for them – and give them the tools to make it happen.

For Moore, who took part in the DiscoverLaw program in 2012, the summer after his freshman year at Florida A&M University, the experience was life-changing. He was studying industrial engineering, but “I was looking to do something to broaden my horizons at bit,” he says. So he came back to his hometown, Buffalo, for the summer.

“It was very intense,” he says of his time in DiscoverLaw. “In some ways it was like being back in high school, because we had classes all day, but it was really rigorous.”

It also proved decisive in his choice of careers. “What I enjoyed most about engineering was the connection of business with the mechanical end,” he says. “Ultimately I came to the realization that law school is what interests me the most.” He changed his major to economics, which delayed his graduation date by a year.

Moore applied to a handful of law schools, even visiting some of them, but “I felt more comfortable when I was at UB,” he says. “I knew that going to law school was going to be difficult, and I come to Buffalo with a nice little support structure already there.”

And he comes prepared: “If the first year of law school is anything like DiscoverLaw,” he says, “it’ll be quite the challenge.”

Arrianna Hart, a New York City native, was a sophomore at Buffalo’s Canisius College when she came to O’Brian Hall for a mock trial competition. There she ran across Lillie Wiley-Upshaw, vice dean for admissions and student life, who was there to talk to the competitors about DiscoverLaw. “She said it was a way to have an actual law school experience and get a little feel of what it would be like,” Hart says.

Hart already was motivated to become a lawyer. She remembers that her mother, a paralegal, would sometimes take her along to court, where Arrianna watched the attorneys at work. They had cuff links, she says; that made a big impression on her.

But, she says, “I wasn’t really sure when I was planning to attend law school, whether I would take a year off or go right after I graduated from Canisius. DiscoverLaw assisted me in making that decision, and UB offered me a lot of support.”

That initial move upstate for college was difficult; for one thing, she had never seen so much snow. “But after four years I had made so many friendships,” Hart says, “and the community at UB was so warm and welcoming. The decision was pretty easy to make.”

And her alarm clock is ready. “We cringed, waking up at 8 o’clock for our 9 o’clock classes that summer,” she says. “But it woke us up to the reality of what law school is.”

DiscoverLaw, originally co-sponsored by the Law School Admission Council and the Minority Bar Association of Western New York, will hold its fifth session in summer 2017 thanks to the support of many generous donors, law firms and foundations. To donate or volunteer, please contact Shatorah Donovan at snr4@buffalo.edu or (716) 645-9048.

Anyone interested in applying for DiscoverLaw should contact the Office of Admissions at (716) 645-2907 or email law-admissions@buffalo.edu.

For more information, visit law.buffalo.edu/scholarsProgram.