

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS WANTING TO PURSUE A LEGAL CAREER WITH MELINDA SNYDER

MOLLY CALO ~ NOVEMBER 2021



I had the privilege of virtually interviewing Melinda Snyder, the Assistant Director of Career Services at VCU. She advises students interested in public service and non-profit career paths. At Career Services, VCU students can receive help with resumes, job searches, job interview preparation, and so much more. Melinda was kind enough to offer her expertise and words of wisdom for students interested in careers in the legal field.

I asked her some of the most common questions that I have heard my peers ask and some questions I had myself. For the most part we discussed how to make sure a legal career is what you want to do before applying to law school. Melinda said she had heard from law school admission departments that if there is anything you want to do that is not law school or a legal career to do it before law school. This is advice that I myself have heard from law school admissions officers and in my own appointments with Melinda for career planning.

For where students interested in a legal career should start, Melinda advises learning about the career you are interested in by getting some exposure to the field. Some ways to do this are to make an appointment with her at Career Services, speak to someone in the field currently, and if possible find an internship, part-time work, or volunteer in your area of interest. I asked Melinda if there were any specific classes or majors she would recommend for a student in this position. She recommends a class that is in some way related to the legal field but expressed that there is no specific major that is needed. Even having an atypical major for a law school applicant might help them stand out in their application cycle.

Melinda emphasized that rather than having a specific major, future legal professionals should work on improving their writing skills. Writing is a skill that is foundational to a legal career, so it is best to develop it before you get to law school. She recommends taking classes that are writing intensive in order to improve on this skill. If a class is writing intensive it is usually listed as such. She also advises students to be engaged in things that interest them such as clubs and organizations.

She recommends that if you are starting out in your academic career to be sure to focus on your GPA and on building skills such as critical thinking and writing. If you are unsure about a legal career Melinda says to get as much exposure as you can. Talk to your professors, get an internship, part-time work, volunteer in that field if possible, or even use VCU Link to reach out to VCU alumni in the field. Learning more about the field will help you decide if this career path is right for you. These opportunities can even lead to shadowing opportunities which are another great way to get exposure to the field.

Before jumping into a legal career, make sure it is something you are passionate about and interested in. If you are not sure or just need some advice, make an appointment with Melinda Snyder at Career Services via Handshake. Currently, appointments are being conducted virtually or via phone call, but Career Services is still there for you. They offer help with personal statements, resumes, career planning, and more. The Career Services website is also full of helpful resources on resumes, cover letters, and interviewing. Visit the Career Services Law Page for course recommendations, application timelines, and other useful resources.

PRE-LAW SOCIETY AT VCU



"The pre-law society of Virginia Commonwealth University is a non-partisan organization that provides a platform for members to express personal opinions and experiences. All information posted is strictly for educational and informational purposes. The Society does not endorse these views."