

Thursday, September 18, 2008

OU prepared two alumni for law school

Mike Murphy, CAS '01, and Adam Kochenderfer, CAS '02, both attended Oakland University and went on to law school at the University of Michigan, but they did it in very different ways. Both, Murphy and Kochenderfer believe their Oakland University education prepared them not only for law school but also for being attorneys.

Murphy didn't know he wanted to go to law school until he had worked for a few years after graduation. Murphy majored in journalism and took many classes that he said provided him with a good foundation for law school. Murphy cited public speaking, political sciences classes, a constitutional law class and the journalism program's Law of the Press course.

"Without a doubt, the personal interest the professors had in me, particularly in pushing me to work harder, was extraordinarily helpful. Law school classes require a lot of self-motivation. For many of them, there are no quizzes, no papers, no grades other than a gigantic cumulative final. So developing a work ethic at OU was extremely important," Murphy said. "I'd recommend that students interested in law school take classes with a lot of reading and writing. You simply can't have enough."

Kochenderfer, who majored in political science, knew earlier on that he would pursue law school and found many resources at OU for his preparation for it.

"When I first started at OU, I had a hunch that I wanted to go to law school, but I didn't know for sure until I got involved with student government and politics," Kochenderfer said.

Kochenderfer, who eventually served as student body president, also was involved with the OU Pre-Law Society, which allowed him to take practice LSATs for free, under simulated conditions. He was also able to hear presentations from the admissions staff at a number of institutions with his peers rather than college fairs where he was just another face in the crowd.

"You can major in anything as an undergrad and go to law school. The great thing about OU is that when I talked to advisers, no one tried to steer me into political science and no one tried to pigeon hole me. I felt very prepared for law school after I left OU. I picked up a very important set of skills here. Critical thinking, judgment and problem solution," Kochenderfer said. "The administration and staff gave us as students a lot of room to be independent, problem-solve and craft solutions. I felt prepared, I feel prepared today and I love what I do today."

Kochenderfer is an attorney with Honigman, Miller, Schwartz and Cohen and was named a Michigan Rising Star by "Super Lawyers" magazine. He also serves on the Board of Director of the Oakland University Alumni Association. Murphy is a litigation associate for a law firm on the East Coast. Prior to that, he served as a clerk for Justice Sandra Newman of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Both Kochenderfer and Murphy encourage students to be as active outside of the classroom as they are inside.

Kochenderfer said there are more than 100 student organizations and urged students to go to the Center for Student Activities to find out what organizations they are interested in joining. Just being involved in an organization will provide the student with a leadership experience and the opportunity to use what they learn in the classroom. Murphy agreed that involvement as an undergraduate is important when contemplating law school.

"Law schools really do look at an applicant's entire file and many of them like to build a student body of different people. I'd say students interested in law school should join student organizations that they like and be actively involved in them. It's better to be involved in one or two student organizations, enjoy it, and do a lot with them, than be attached to six or seven organizations and barely show up," Murphy said. "More importantly, I'd say that students interested in law school should seek out practicing attorneys and shadow them, and seek out summer internships in law offices. There's really no better way to be prepared for legal practice than to see it up close."

For more information on the pre-law concentration at OU, visit the [Pre-Law](#) Web site or meet with an academic adviser. To learn about academic advising at OU, including academic advisers within the college and each school, visit the [Academic Advising](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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