

Final Reflection on My 2014 Summer Enrichment Experience in Law and CSI

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How do I start the introduction to such a great big adventure? Well, here goes. This summer, I attended NYLF: Careers in Law and CSI in Washington, D.C.

Hitting the Ground Running

Upon arrival, I checked into the hotel where the program was based, assuming that the program directors would let us rest in our rooms following dinner. I soon learned, however, that this program was not the place for rest. Immediately upon checking in, I had to change into professional attire and meet my Judicial Activities Meeting (JAM) group, which consisted of about 30 people. This was how I would spend my time before and after seminars, speakers and the conduct a couple of trials.

Now, before I share my program experience, I want to mention that, prior to reaching the hotel, I made it my personal goal to be a more social person and talk to people because I tend to refrain from doing that when I don't know someone. As a result, I made my first friend in my JAM group very quickly because we had on matching shoes.

On Sunday night, we had our first keynote speaker. His name was Thomas Haynesworth, and he was wrongly convicted, serving 27 years for more than 18 different criminal counts, including five rapes. Through the use of DNA testing, however, he was exonerated. Following Mr. Haynesworth's very moving presentation, we were allowed to ask questions. One of the questions inquired into his feelings about the system that had wrongfully incarcerated him for so long. Right off the bat, he said that he wouldn't change a thing, and that he is now working with the Virginia Attorney General and playing a big part in the Innocence Project.

Mr. Haynesworth was the first of many interesting speakers who came to talk to us. Some people worked with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, and others were professors of forensic science who had worked on very intriguing cases. We gained knowledge of both law and forensic science by raptly listening to the speakers as they related their amazing experiences within their respective areas of expertise. We also learned that law and forensic science work hand in hand, and that a person needs background knowledge of one in order to properly understand the other.

Moot Court Experiences and a Taste of Law School

The next day, we began to prepare for our first mock trial. We were given a handbook on the very first day. In it, there were many different codes and laws that pertained to our case. Each person was assigned to play a role on the prosecution, defense or forensic science. I was assigned to the prosecution team.

The program intended for me to learn how to create an opening statement, examine a witness, and understand the ins and outs of how a trial works. However, I also learned how hard it is to work with people who don't want to work with you—and how to win a case despite their lack of cooperation.

In the midst of our preparations, we visited the Maryland Law School where we received presentations on numerous legal fields. In addition, we watched a mock trial on a case similar to *Tinker v. Des Moines*. The law school experience really opened my eyes to the fact that a person can choose to go to law school regardless of undergrad major.

When we returned to our hotel, we continued to prepare for our mock trial and then put on the case. In addition to the mock trial, we also participated in a Supreme Court case simulation, which was similar to the mock trial in the sense that we read up on the case and presented our side based on creating arguments related the codes and laws presented to us. The primary difference was that we also had to write a brief for the justices to study.

Weaving Some Play into Much Hard Work

In the midst all of this hard work, it felt like we barely had any time socialize with each other. But the program arranged for such opportunities. We had a cupcake social, a dance and even got to visit downtown D.C. By this time, I had made a few more friends, and we formed a little group comprised of very diverse individuals. We found a common ground and were consistently the loudest cohort, laughing together about one thing or another.

While visiting D.C., we walked seven miles and had so much fun. After the D.C. adventure, we got dressed up for the dance. It was a wonderful night that ended much too soon. Before I knew it, I had to say goodbye to the amazing people I had met.

Take Away Lessons

This program provided me with a lot of background on the field of law. And, in fact, I think that I might actually want to pursue it as a career. Practicing law, conducting trials and preparing opening statements are all things that I learned I might truly enjoy. Along the way, I also learned that being an open person not only leads you to meet amazing people, but it also allows you to fully enjoy experiences.

I am so thankful for the opportunity I received because I don't think I would have pursued this program without the scholarship from the Garwin Family Foundation. I was able to have a wonderful experience that exposed me to the realm of law and how it plays a role in even the simplest of areas of life. This experience is something I will keep with me for the rest of my life, and hopefully, in the future, I can credit it for the reason I chose to become a successful lawyer.