



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

College of Letters & Science

Alumni Spotlight

This month's Spotlight features Kristen, a former Classics major who is now commanding courtrooms and protecting the underserved as a general practice attorney.

Kristen Care: Attorney



What are you up to now, post-graduation?

I am currently practicing law with a private, general practice firm in Bremerton, WA. My firm is in an underserved community and is very well respected. Because of that, my firm has the freedom to take on great cases and pick out good clients, which is really liberating. I'd say the three biggest practice areas for my firm are estate planning, which includes helping people make wills and other planning for after they pass away; personal injury, including property disputes; and business & commercial law, which is my strong area. The other cool thing about my firm is that it's small and committed to community involvement. I joined the Young Lawyers Association, which is filled with attorneys who are leaders in the community, and I'm already involved in planning the Bar Association's annual picnic!

How did you get to where you are?

I grew up in El Paso, TX. I got to where I am now by being adaptable to whatever the world throws at me. In high school, though I focused on performing arts, I was forced to take a Speech & Debate class, which was made a little cooler because *Legally Blonde* had just come out. I was assigned to debate in favor of cloning. Since I loved science, I was excited to show all my classmates, who were very politically Catholic, the benefits that cloning could offer. I put together strong evidence for the medical benefits and was ready for all the counter-arguments I knew were coming. At the end of the debate, my teacher asked the class to vote who won. Nearly the entire class voted for the other student. I was shocked. My teacher spoke up and said that, contrary to the class's opin-

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ion, she felt I presented the superior case and declared me the winner. That was my first real lesson that no matter how strong your case may be, you can always lose to public opinion. I also realized that I had a knack for arguing and reminded myself to keep law as a backup career path.

When it came time to look for a college, I knew I wanted to leave Texas. I applied for schools all over the country. I didn't know anything about UCSB, but on the UC application, my mom recommended that I check UCSB, so I did.

I started to receive invitations to audition for different music programs. One invite was to UCSB. I had travelled from Hawaii to New York looking at schools, and was getting frustrated with my options. New York was too loud and dirty. Hawaii was too small and isolated. New Mexico was too close to home. I remember stepping off the plane in Santa Barbara, smelling jasmine in

the air, and thinking, "this place is special." I arrived a day early, but the girls running the check in said I could audition that day if I wanted to. So I did some warm ups, had my audition, and I was accepted to the Bachelor of Music program! I was SO excited. I was in the first class to participate in the Freshman Summer Start Program. They did not have any Japanese or voice classes for me, so I signed up for a Classics course, Introduction to Mythology.

When it came to Fall courses, I couldn't figure out how to fit Japanese into my course load for the Bachelor of Music program. I spoke to the advisor, and she let me know that the rigor of the B.M. did not leave much room for other studies. I loved my Classics class, and I was determined to study Japanese, so I switched into Classics and Japanese.

I figured I would study Japanese and become an international businesswoman. Well, I studied abroad in Tokyo my third year of college and

realized that I didn't want to live in Japan full time after all. I had to switch gears fast and was panicked. I looked at the PhD track to become a professor and that didn't appeal to me either. My friend started studying for the LSAT, and I remembered that little law backup I had told myself to remember in high school. I took the LSAT, got into one of my top choice schools, and now I'm an attorney!

What was the best thing you did as an undergrad to help you get to where you are?

I never boxed myself in to one ideal for myself. If something I was interested in was not being offered, I opened my mind to new courses. That's how I discovered Classics. Classics taught me foundational skills I'd end up using later on. I learned how to write long papers in a short amount of time. Busting out 5-10 page legal papers over a semester didn't seem so hard after drafting 15-25 page

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essays for three different courses in a quarter. I can’t think of another degree that teaches students how to analyze and interpret civil data as strongly as Classics. When we read ancient texts, we weren’t taught to read them at face value—we had to interpret. What did that grocery list teach us about the diet of the culture at the time, and what did that show us about the environment and climate? What did the laws on divorce show about land ownership, family values, and the rights of men and women? This skill set is critical in drafting and analyzing laws, deconstructing opposing arguments, and in negotiation.

I also developed strong relationships with my professors. One quarter, I was suffering really badly from mold exposure. I just wanted to sleep all day, but I couldn’t even do that because I felt so bad. I actually was on the verge of failing one of my courses. I had already taken a few courses with this professor, so he knew that I was an A to high B student. I never missed an assignment and I certainly didn’t fail. He approached me one day after class to ask why I had, yet again, not turned in one of our weekly papers. I broke down and told him I didn’t know what was wrong, but that I

couldn’t function normally. He ordered me to get my butt to student health, concerned with how much I had deteriorated in one quarter, and then graciously allowed me the opportunity to turn the class around and get my work in. He gave me the support I needed to get better. However, he reached out because he knew my potential from my past work and knew something was wrong. Relationships are the key to life.

What do you wish you had known while you were in undergrad?

Professors are human. They should not be viewed as scary, unapproachable people. Office hours exist because professors want to interact with their students. Faculty get new, fresh ideas from working with their students, and are happy to help out as well. I felt like I was a burden asking for letters of recommendation for my post-grad applications. Instead, every professor I asked was enthusiastic. I wish I had fostered those relationships further so I could have participated in more research. I wish I would have at least attempted to publish one article or paper during undergrad. I had no idea how positive a publication looks on a resume. You have an entire depart-

ment of trained professionals happy to help and guide you. Use it and get published!

Also, I wish I’d minored in some hard science like chemistry or physics. I really wanted to do trademark law out of law school, but since the economy crashed, IP (intellectual property) firms were only hiring lawyers who could sit for the patent bar. You can only sit for the patent bar if you have a certain amount of science credits from undergrad. Plus, science is



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Next month's spotlight features Corinne, a former Linguistics major who, having taught FBI agents and worked for D.C.'s Applied Linguistics Center, is now an advocate for minority language communities in New Zealand.

cool and I would have enjoyed seeing the world in a different light.

What was the best thing about being a Gaucho?

UCSB was such a unique school. It was a large university with a small school feel. I got to attend a special graduation celebration for Classics graduates. I recognized everyone there and my professors recognized me.

Most importantly, I got to be me. In one school, I pursued professional singing, performed in an Improv comedy group, studied foreign languages (Japanese, Italian, Ancient Greek and Latin), lived in Japan, and then became a lawyer.

Any final words of wisdom for the current Gaucho generation?

You often hear that you are your own worst critic. This is true. But

you are also your own best cheerleader, and you will need to be to overcome people who try to put you down. I had a classmate in high school biology tell me I didn't know what I was doing because I giggled in class (meanwhile, he was setting up his DNA model backward). I had people discourage me from science, math, and business. When I was studying for the LSATs, a classmate said that if I worked hard, one day I could be his secretary. As a practicing attorney, I had a fellow lawyer tell me that I was wasting my beauty in law and should stop spending my time in court. I tell you this because for many years, I believed them.

What I've found since then is that I am as capable as I want to be. I have accomplished everything I have put effort into. I have achieved. And no matter what other people may say, so can you.



Kristen welcomes UCSB students to contact her via LinkedIn with questions about the field and advice on how to prepare for a career in law. Requests to review resumes or inquiries about open positions will not be responded to.

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Editor:

Brandilyn Gilbert
Academic Advisor

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