

Bowen student goes from studying cello to studying law



You might say Michael Stiritz has law in her DNA. She grew up in Russellville, Arkansas, in a family of lawyers, including her mother and her uncle. However, she didn't seriously consider going to law school until a few years ago.

Instead, she graduated from Wheaton College with a double major in music and English literature. Michael has played the cello since she was five years old and studied it in college, but after graduation she didn't see herself as a professional musician.

She taught cello and piano for the next three years and finished her graduate degree in English with an option in teaching English as a second language at Arkansas Tech University. TESL focuses on the skills necessary to teach English without speaking the second language. She was also a graduate assistant at Arkansas Tech.

Along the way, Michael worked off and on for the Sanford Law Firm. One morning, after a staff meeting discussing the firm's legal writing style guide, she realized how law intersected with her other studies. She made a last-minute decision to apply to law school.

"My mother is attorney, but there was never any pressure or expectation for me to follow that path," Michael said. "But then I told her my decision and she was excited. She said, 'It seems so right.'"

Since Michael didn't take the LSAT until June, she knew she'd have to wait for applications to open again, which would mean starting a year later than she'd wanted. However, she discovered Bowen had extended its part-time application period into July. She was accepted, and started that same year.

While she finished her 1L year in the part-time program, she's transitioned to the full-time division for her 2L and 3L years.

"Having a day job and going to law school in the evenings was busy," Michael said. "But it made for a good transition and experience. It was an unexpected blessing."

When she's not in class, Michael is still working for her uncle's firm. The Sanford Law Firm does employment law, particularly wage and hour law. What she's found is that law school informs her work, and vice versa. "One of my recent wage and hour cases went to arbitration because of an arbitration agreement, which tied to contract law—which I was taking in law school."

She's also found that skills she developed as a literature major pair well with law school. The ability to analyze writing and use that analysis to develop larger themes helps her write more logically.

However, her favorite class so far isn't legal writing. It's Professor Oliver's Torts class. "He's such a good teacher, but he's also kind and very funny. I've enjoyed him so much."

Michael's job at the firm started as part-time but quickly grew to be full-time. "It's fascinating work, but it leaves little time during the day for anything but school and studying."

This year, her 2L year, she's working 20 hours, has a full-time class load, and is a law review apprentice. She's also involved in Bowen's chapter of the Christian Legal Society. "It's great that they meet in the hour between work and class."

And she says she'd do it all again. "It's been a good year. I don't regret coming."



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