

Bright path ahead

UB Law graduates chosen for prestigious Presidential Management Fellowships

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In good company

Top five universities in Presidential Management Fellowships for law students, 2008

- Harvard University
- Georgetown University
- University of Maryland
- College of William & Mary
- University at Buffalo

A federal program to attract the best and brightest to government service has chosen its 2008 group of Presidential Management Fellows – and six are new UB Law graduates. Only four schools nationwide had more law students win the prestigious fellowships. Lisa M. Patterson, associate dean for career services, said the achievement reflects students' broader awareness of the program's extraordinary opportunities. From a single Presidential Management Fellow in 2006, the ranks grew to four in 2007, and to six in the current class.

"This is a great opportunity, but not everyone is keyed into it," Patterson says. "One of the drawbacks has always been that the PMF program is not geared toward lawyers specifically. The Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission and other agencies have their own programs for law graduates. And especially with our concentrations here, lot of times students will have an idea of the government agency they want to work for. But this program is a very good foot in the door to the federal system."

Because the program is open to students in all disciplines – not just lawyers – Patterson says the work is less specifically oriented to legal practice. "You might come in as a policy analyst or some other title," she says, "but just because you are not called an attorney does not mean you are not doing legal work."

Of the six, five – Harold Babcock-Ellis, Dan Christiansen, Emily Conley, Glenn Howard and Brian McCarthy – have chosen to accept the fellowship and enter government service.

BRIAN MCCARTHY says his posting to the Office of Clinical Affairs, part of the Department of Veterans Affairs, is a perfect fit for his dual degree in law and public health. He will analyze the health care that the VA provides and advocate for public policy that enables better care.

"I am very excited about it," McCarthy says. "I like to deal with policy as it is implemented, to create a continuum of care within the veterans system. My office is the national office that oversees everything."

The position calls on many of the skills he learned in earning his dual de-

gree. "Public health is an interdisciplinary degree that gives you a background in biostatistics, epidemiology, health care policy and health care financing," he says. "It gives you the global picture of the various factors that go into crafting an equitable and appropriate health care policy."

In her Presidential Management Fellowship, **EMILY CONLEY** will be entrusted with responsibility rarely given to freshly minted lawyers: As part of the Asylum and Refugee Division of the Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services, she will serve as an adjudicator, hearing up to four asylum cases daily and writing decisions on those petitions.

"I was interested in working for the government when I graduated," Conley says. "I knew I did not want to work for a law firm and do anything too traditional. This was just a really good way to get into government work."

"And I wanted to do something that would let me travel internationally. I was not really interested in litigation or anything formal. I wanted to be more on the policy end of it. This program seems like a good investment in the long run in myself and my career."

She will undergo rigorous training before she starts hearing cases. Even so, she recognizes that she will hold in her hands the fate of would-be immigrants to the United States, and she knows that



Among the recipients of Presidential Management Fellowships: Daniel J. Christiansen '08, Emily G. Conley '08 and Harold T. Babcock-Ellis '08.

emotions will run high.

"My suspicion is that at first it is going to be hard to say no," Conley says. "There will always be things that hurt your heart and things that you wish you could make work. But through my Law School training, I know that everybody does not have a legal claim."

"Having a legal background gives you the ability to rationalize and see things from both sides and understand head over heart sometimes."

DAN CHRISTIANSEN will join the Department of Education, evaluating how well learning institutions implement federal educational grants. The work, he says, has elements of compliance, finance and law practice.

"I always wanted to work for the government anyway, so it was something I was interested in," Christiansen says. "I have always been interested in policy

and politics in general; I was a political science major as an undergraduate. And I have just finished the New York City program in finance, so that was really valuable experience."

For **HAROLD BABCOCK-ELLIS**, the fellowship will lead him to the Space and Missile Systems Center, a division of the Air Force. There he will negotiate construction contracts for equipment like satellites.

"The federal government, with rare exceptions, does not hire students right out of law school," Babcock-Ellis says. "I will not actually be a practicing attorney for this, but it is a two-year program, and I can stay on there or transfer to an attorney position in the federal government."

"I consider this public service. I definitely want to give something back."