

STUDENTS

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Meet four students whose roads to the School of Law have been less than conventional. Their unique passions, they say, will undoubtedly go on to shape their approach to lawyering.

By Laurie Legum
Photography by Justin Tsucalas



CHEERS!

Ryan Cianci grew up in Las Vegas, so it's no surprise that his foray into the service industry began early. He started waiting tables in high school and by college worked his way up to become a sommelier at Delmonico's Steak House in Las Vegas.

"My enthusiasm with wine began with a German Riesling," he recalls. "Before tasting the Riesling, I thought all wines were the same." From there, his interests broadened to include different varietals and styles. "The type of wine I drink is largely dictated by what I'm doing," he says. "If I'm by the pool, I usually go for a Sauvignon Blanc. If I'm dining at a steakhouse, then I'd order an Italian Barolo. Overall, wine is really about drinking what you like."

Now about to enter his third year of law school, Cianci hopes to use his newly gained legal acumen to push for reform of Maryland's liquor laws. "My goal is to combine my knowledge of wine and spirits with my degree and then lobby to get Maryland's outdated liquor laws modernized," says Cianci.

There has been some recent progress, he notes. Maryland residents can now have wines shipped directly to their residences from properly licensed wineries. And as of July 1, patrons of some restaurants with liquor licenses will be allowed to carry in their own bottles of wine (with restaurant owners charging a "corkage" fee).

Says Cianci, "These are steps in the right direction, but more must be done in order to make wine more accessible to people in Maryland."

SPEAKING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

Though **Juliana Neelbauer** studied ancient Greek and Spanish during college at University of Pennsylvania, it's the high-tech language of computers that became her passion.

In 2007, she and her husband, Robert, launched staffmagnet, LLC, a consulting company in Washington, D.C., that provides recruitment and operations services to software companies along the East Coast. A year later, they rolled out Social Matchbox, a launch event series for tech start-ups. Their aim: to raise the profile of the Mid-Atlantic start-up scene and to give start-up founders the opportunity to network with potential investors.

Before long, Neelbauer saw another opportunity to serve the needs of technology businesses. "I observed how small and mid-sized companies struggle to find legal counselors who understand [their] unique and rapidly-evolving legal needs," she says. "I decided to earn a law degree in order to serve those needs myself."

"I consider myself amid a career pivot rather than a career change," says Neelbauer. "Practicing law is a natural extension of providing operations consulting services, because the practice of law makes me a better contract drafter, negotiator, and business analyst. The complex issues of patents, copyrights, capital management, M&A, and technology converge for companies that sell technology products and services. As an attorney, I will speak all of those languages, share the fruits of my established network, and provide truly holistic advice."



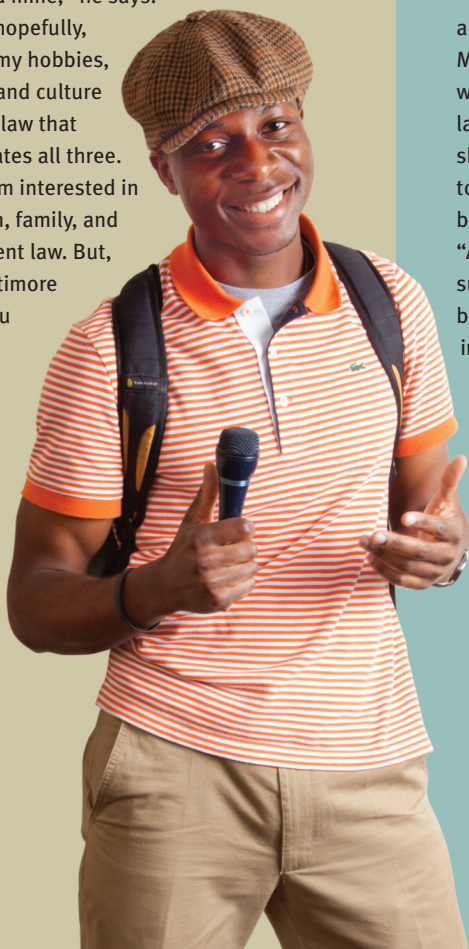
A SONG IN HIS HEART

Eddie Emokpae, a second-year law student, originally hails from Edo State, Nigeria. He moved to Maryland in 1996 when his family was granted political asylum in the United States after his father was framed for a coup and sentenced to death by firing squad.

Emokpae was an avid soccer player while in college at Goucher and UMBC, where he also pursued his passion for music. "I'm a singer-songwriter. I play the acoustic guitar, write songs, and, once in a while, I add some covers to the mix," he says. "After graduating from college I was approached [by representatives] from a couple of labels and was on the verge of signing a record deal. However, my decision to come to law school put my music career on hold."

Emokpae's decision to study law was motivated in part by his family's experience. "I want to use my degree as a tool to help people; to positively affect lives in the same way that international and immigration law has affected mine," he says.

"I plan on, hopefully, combining my hobbies, education, and culture in a field of law that accommodates all three. Currently, I'm interested in immigration, family, and entertainment law. But, like the Baltimore weather, you never really know what tomorrow will bring."



SEEING GREEN

Justine Moreau grew up in a large family of agricultural entrepreneurs in Albany, N.Y. To offset the cost of college at Cornell, she paired her working knowledge of plants and business to start her own garden design business. At Cornell, Moreau majored in international agriculture and rural development while also continuing to build her seasonal business. "I enjoyed the work because it provided a creative outlet with the autonomy that comes with entrepreneurship," she says.

During her three years at UM Carey Law, Moreau managed to keep the business running. "Before law school, we did full-scale residential and commercial design as well as floral design for formal events. Now, since I am in another state and have to manage long distance, I have scaled back and only continue residential design work at a limited number of homes," she says.

Moreau initially planned to pursue a career in environmental law ("I came to Maryland because of Professor Percival's work in international environmental law and the reputable program," she says), but now is leaning more toward transactional law—business, corporate, or real estate. "At this point," she says, "I am not sure if I will continue my business, but I would like to continue working in a business-related capacity." ■



Only part of the story...

Ryan, Juliana, Eddie and Justine are only four of our extraordinary students. Each year, more than 800 students call UM Carey Law their academic home. For more stories about our students, please visit www.law.umaryland.edu