

## Ep 2 Transitioning from undergrad to LS.mp3

**Carlos:** Closed captioning for this episode is available thanks to the Office of Disability Service at the Syracuse University College of Law.

**Elizabeth:** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the ASF incoming one, our podcast series. My name is Hayley Pooler. I'm a rising to L here at Syracuse University College of Law.

**Elizabeth:** And my name is Elizabeth Boswell and I'm a rising three I here. And today we're here to talk about the transition from undergraduate to law school. So let's get right into it. Haley, tell me about your background. Did you jump right into law school from undergrad? Did you take a gap year or did you work before coming to law school?

**Hayley:** So it's a funny story. Actually, I didn't plan to take a gap year, and I even like graduated college early. So because I knew I wanted to come to law school. So I plan to attend the University of Kentucky in the fall of 2019. But when it came down to it, I ended up deciding not to go. I live only an hour north of Syracuse and I have a brother who was a senior in high school at the time, and we're pretty close, so I didn't want to miss his entire senior year. He plays sports and things like that, and I just didn't want to miss all of that. So I took a year off and then decided that Syracuse would be a better fit for me, especially considering that I would be starting law school in the middle of a pandemic.

**Elizabeth:** I hear you. It must have been tough starting off in the middle of the pandemic. It was hard for me to like, adjust after a year of law school in person, like I can't imagine starting law school in the pandemic. I personally started law school right after finishing my undergraduate degree in 2019, so no gap here. Anything but I know a bunch of my friends from Law School took gap year or they came from like a master's or like other graduate program and like some people worked before they came here. So law school is definitely a good mix of people from all different walks of life. So how was your transition to law school? Was it difficult adjustment from undergrad? I know you were a year out, but

**Hayley:** So my situation due to the pandemic was much different than any other law school class. On top of all the usual transition struggles, I transition to school that was completely online for an entire year, with the exception of one class that I had in person during the fall semester. I had never taken any online classes prior to then, so the format was definitely a huge adjustment. I had to get used to doing class in a completely different environment where I walked from my bed to my desk and back for the majority of the day. But for the most part, the adjustment was as smooth as it could have been during a pandemic. I had only been removed from college for a year, like you said. So most of the college campus vibes, you could say, were very familiar.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, I hear you. I think for me, a big difference between undergrad and law school is that an undergrad, like your textbooks and reading are distilled for you. So like all the salient information's already pulled out and like the authors, just give you what you need to know. So it's a bunch of secondary sources, whereas in law school, since the bulk of our reading is cases, we really have to like sift through the opinion and like, pull away the important points ourselves instead of being given to us. So it's a lot of primary source material.

**Hayley:** Yeah, I definitely agree. I was a bio major for undergrad and it would be like in biology if you were to read a bunch of peer reviewed science articles with every little statistic explained to learn about something like photosynthesis, where you could go to like an eighth grade textbook or even younger and get like the distilled information from a textbook.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. So I think that's part of why it's so slow going at the beginning, because it takes time to learn how to read a legal opinion to know what parts of the case are important and figure out what the takeaway is supposed to be. So like an undergrad, I could read 20 pages in like half an hour or less, and then law school 20 pages could take like an hour or more.

**Hayley:** Yeah, I definitely agree it's a totally different type of content that we're reading that not many people have ever experienced before, so it definitely takes time to adjust.

**Elizabeth:** Right. And legal writing is super dense. I think in undergrad they do a lot more like explaining and hand-holding in like the textbooks and stuff, whereas in law school, it's just like every sentence adds value. So that's part of what makes it slower to.

**Hayley:** Yeah, so moving on from reading. Tell me more about your transition from undergrad, was it a big adjustment as far as studying? Did you have to change your study approach at all?

**Elizabeth:** Well, for me in undergrad, it wasn't a lot of like heavy lifting. So like I went to class and I did the readings and everything. I took like a few notes, but I didn't. It's not like I had to study for hours or anything in undergrad, like I did OK, kind of coasting through, but I knew that in law school I wouldn't be able to get away with that. So I think part of it was. Like the mental adjustment that I'd have to do more work, but like I was prepared for it, but some of my friends from law school, like they came into it thinking like they could get away with the same things they did in undergrad and kind of coast through it. And they kind of came into a rude awakening. I mean, some of my friends, like, kept doing what they were doing in undergrad and it worked for them, but for a lot of them, it didn't. So it just, I guess, depends on the person.

**Hayley:** Yeah, I would definitely agree. I would say I had a similar undergrad experience to you, but I definitely think that we are the minority. So as a bio major, even I would study for exams and even finals for maybe three or four days like Max. Every once in a while, I'd have to study for an exam for maybe a week, but I don't think I've ever I ever spent any more than a week studying for an exam. I would definitely. I definitely knew that the heavier workload was coming when I chose to come to law school, but I didn't realize that in the beginning how much I would have to change my study habits because I didn't have any really. So when you come to law school, one hundred percent of your grade or close to it is determined by one cumulative exam at the end of the semester. And then it was a huge, rude awakening when I realized that there was absolutely no way I could study for just a couple of days before the exam and be able to retain all the information I needed to.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, for sure. Like an undergrad, we had quizzes and homework and stuff to contribute to our grade, whereas in law school it's like pretty much just the final and some participation, some participation as well. So like a lot of the time, participation was voluntary in undergrad, but like in law school, because they could call us, it's basically mandatory. So like if you miss a class, you miss out on so much more in law school than you did if you miss a class in undergrad because like you don't learn from the lecture just straight up like you did in undergrad because it's Socratic seminar and your classmates discussions are a big part of how you get the material. So it's not like you can just like look at your professor's slides and get everything that you missed because a lot of the material comes out of the discussion and it just can't be replicated.

**Hayley:** Yeah, definitely. At one point or another, during the semester, it's inevitable that you'll get called on by a professor and sometimes you have no idea when that will be, or it may even happen multiple times, maybe even more than once a week when starting law school. I had to realize that I had to wrestle with the course material more in order for me to understand it. I couldn't read a textbook once or watch one video and understand I had to read, reread, look up videos, look up other explanations. Listen to it explained in lectures in order for me to understand. And hey, even sometimes, then I still didn't understand.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, for sure. Like an undergrad, I could go over something once and totally understand it. And in law school, I may have to read a paragraph like three or four times to even kind of grasp the point. So that was a big adjustment.

**Hayley:** But I also think that everyone who gets into law school and comes to law school has been successful in their lives so far, and they've gotten good grades and they've succeeded in whatever they've chosen to do. I do know a lot of my friends are very smart people because almost everybody or everybody is in law school and they all get like B minuses or C's in their first semester and it sends them down like a huge spiral because a lot of them have never even gotten grades that were A's before I had received one B in my entire college career. And then my first semester grades were definitely a huge awakening.

**Elizabeth:** I totally agree. Law School was just like that for me too. I always got A's and stuff. And then my first semester of law school, I got a few lower grades than that, and I was just like, What's going on? And I think a big part of the adjustment to law school is changing how you define success. So not just based off of your grades, but by a bunch of other things too. So like for me in my two all year, I did the elder law clinic, and that was a big thing for me because I'm like before I came to law school. And even while I was here my first year, I wasn't entirely sure if it was the right choice for me. But through the clinic, it gave me the confidence like I have the competence to like, help people out and work as an attorney. So that was how I defined my success for some of my friends. They found success by like being on a journal or in like HHS or court or whatever, or like some of my friends, like they were just happy to see that they did better this semester than they did last semester. So just however you define success, don't do it just by your grades, I guess, and say,

**Hayley:** Yeah, I definitely agree. There is so much more to law school than just getting straight A's. A lot of that, a lot of the struggle. I think with that is that a lot of those other opportunities that employers actually do care about somewhat don't necessarily come into the picture until after year one all year. So it's really hard to remove yourself from just thinking about grades during one all year. So you definitely have to try to make that effort. I didn't know a single person who got straight A's in either semester of my first year of law school.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, me either. But like aside from grades and stuff, so what was your living situation like in undergrad as compared to law school? Because when I was in undergrad, I lived at home with my parents because my college was pretty close to my hometown. So when I started at LSU, it was like my first time having to deal with apartment hunting and all of that. I ultimately ended up at Campus West, which is right across the street, if you don't know. And it was really nice for my first and second year just because it was right across the street. I didn't have to worry about driving in the winter weather, and the apartments are very cushy, too. So it was nice, but it was pretty expensive. What about you? What was your living situation like?

**Hayley:** So my undergraduate college changed the rule, my sophomore year, that no students were allowed to live off of campus. However, I did end up living in like a brand new apartment style building for two of my three years there. So the apartment vibe was definitely pretty familiar. Finding an apartment in Syracuse wasn't awful, but it was made more difficult by the fact that during the middle of the pandemic, you couldn't go visit anywhere or look at any apartments other than what pictures were. Online and pictures online aren't always representative. So I also knew that because most of the classes would be online during the pandemic, I think I thought I wanted to have a roommate. But again, it was also hard because I wasn't able to meet anybody other than through like a phone or Facebook groups. So it wasn't really that easy to find one I did end up. Reaching out to one person who became my roommate for this past year. We live that theory, Syracuse and I honestly didn't have the best experience. I wouldn't take my experience as the only right experience. I definitely know people who have likes living there, but I ultimately decided that not only was theory not the place for me, but with everything returning to in person, I ultimately decided that I wanted to live alone as well. So I'll be moving to three hundred east Washington downtown at the end of July. And it's a brand new building, and I'm pretty excited about it.

**Elizabeth:** That sounds really cool. I like you said I knew I'd rather live alone just because it's a lot to deal with roommates and stuff like if they bring people over, like when you want to study or like if they're loud in your quiet or they're messy and your knee or whatever. But like I said, I had never lived alone before, so it was an adjustment. But it was, I guess, easier for me than for you because I started law school the year before the pandemic. So I went home by in March of my first year. So I did have time to like at the beginning, like I would after classes like my friends and I would go out to eat and then like, we'd study together and stuff. So I guess that's what made living alone easier for me. But it was definitely tough during the pandemic, though, because then I was stuck by myself and I definitely had wished at that time like I had a roommate or something, just someone to talk to and like bounce ideas off of and stuff.

**Hayley:** Yeah, I definitely agree. That was one of my considerations that I kind of considered without even thinking about it, that I didn't really want to be lonely during the pandemic. And I knew that at least having somebody who shared the same space with

me would help with that loneliness, even though even if it didn't like cure it. So I definitely think deciding whether or not to have a roommate is one of those things that you have to be honest with yourself about, because the wrong roommate can definitely add additional stress above and beyond the normal stress that accompanies law school. So you definitely have to be honest with yourself about whether you think that a roommate would actually work for you or whether living alone would just be a better situation.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, for sure. And like, there's no right way to do any of this stuff, you know, like what works for us might not work for you, and whether it's adjusting your studying or reading style, defining success in your own way or figuring out your living situation, no matter what it is, it's just about feeling it out, seeing what works best for you and creating the environment that's best for you. But that looks like all the time we have. So thank you guys for listening. If you have any other questions, you can reach me at [meboswel@syr.edu](mailto:meboswel@syr.edu)

**Hayley:** And my email is [HJPOLLER@syr.edu](mailto:HJPOLLER@syr.edu) as well for any questions. Thanks for listening.