

A Scholarship Makes All the Difference



Cecelia Klingele with her youngest children, both born while she was a law student.

Cecelia Klingele volunteers the information before she is asked. “I’ve loved law school — loved every moment. I’m sad to be leaving.” Her three years have been full of achievement: she won the Association of Women Lawyers award for academic excellence and service to the community; founded the Law School Family Association for encouragement and support to students with families; served as a research assistant to Professors Michael Smith and Walter Dickey in their work on sentencing and correctional policy (“probably my best experience in law school”); and participated in three Remington Center programs (“all wonderful experiences”).

There was a time, however, when she was wondering whether she should accept the Law School’s offer of admission. She and her husband, Brad, had two small children, and she was pregnant with their third.

“I was really worried; I wasn’t sure I could handle both law school and parenting. But two things changed my mind. First, I came to an event at the Law School and saw baby-changing tables in the restroom. That was huge. And then Dean Kransberger offered me a scholarship. That gave me a feeling of acceptance that was central to my decision to come.”

Klingele received scholarship funding from both the William J. Hagenah Fund and the Lawrence A. Olwell Scholarship Fund. “It was the scholarship that made it financially possible,” she says. “But

scholarships do more than open up financial possibilities. They

open people’s imaginations about what they can do. They give a student the opportunity to really be here, to participate in the life of the law school instead of having to spend time away working.

“For me, it gave me the chance to be involved in clinical programs. If I had been carrying a heavier loan, I wouldn’t have been able to work in the Dane County District Attorney’s Office with the Prosecution Project.”

When Klingele decided on law school, she had completed an undergraduate triple major focused on medieval studies and intellectual history. In addition, community service was extremely important to the Klingeles; they had served as foster parents during the years that

Cecelia had chosen to stay at home with their infant daughters. “I wanted a career that was both intellectually rigorous and service-oriented,” she says. Law school filled both requirements.

She started law school intending to work in the field of child welfare, but after a year she changed her focus to criminal law, especially zeroing in on sentencing policy. “Criminal law is not far removed from child welfare law,” she says. “Sadly, the criminal justice system is peopled with grown-up abused children.”

The Klingeles now have five children. Their adopted son is sixteen, and their daughters

are six, four, two, and six months. The last two were born while Cecelia was a law student.

Klingele’s next step will be clerking for U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb for two years, beginning in fall 2005, and she hopes to continue in the field of criminal justice. Thanks to her scholarship, she has come a long way from the days when she wondered whether she could manage law school.

“Scholarships do more than support students,” Klingele says. “They help students contribute to the Law School.”

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