A Scholarship Makes All the Difference

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. 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.”

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

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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.”