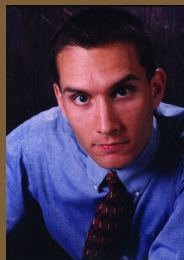


Class of 2006



Michael W. Brazington



Kristy L. Khan



Suneetra N. Mickle



Dara E. Montclare



Keith D. Pangburn



Eunice C. Peters



Richard A. Samaniego



Rand E. Simmons

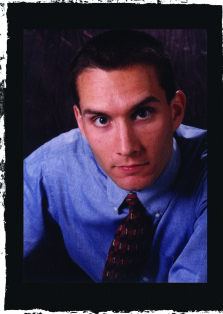


They bring to Washburn University School of Law a diversity of talents, interests and experiences but share a common desire to understand the law. And now, by happenstance, they also share a unique place in the history of Washburn Law: They are members of the Centennial class, the first class of the Law School's second century.

The *Centennial* Class

This Centennial class is already impressive having a top seventy-five percent LSAT average score of 155. The entering class is also diverse; seventeen percent are minorities and women make up forty-five percent of the class. This class has an average age of twenty-six with the oldest student being fifty-four and twenty being the youngest. Students represent twenty-five different states and nine students are not US citizens. Fifteen of the students have received graduate degrees and eighty-seven of the class received their undergraduate degrees within the last two years, while twenty-nine received it more than five years ago. Thirty-seven percent of the class are recipients of merit scholarships.

Meet eight students from the entering class of 2003. We meet these Centennial students as they begin their journey through law school. Our hats go off to them for having traveled so far already. Over the next three years, we will check in on them periodically as they make their way to graduation day in 2006.



Michael W. Brazington

For Michael Brazington, learning is exciting—"like space travel or being a billionaire or something." But he didn't always feel this way. While in high school in Nebraska, Brazington was often more interested in pulling pranks than in making grades. He dropped out of high school during his junior year and returned to school the following year only to drop out again. "Eventually I took my G.E.D., so I guess you can say I'm really non-traditional," Brazington said.

Despite these early missteps, Brazington eventually graduated from Union College in Lincoln,

NE, with a B.A. in religion. "It was an honor to graduate," said Brazington when asked if he graduated with honors. In fact, the college's religion department discouraged competition and therefore had no official honor. That said, Brazington was given the unofficial designation "most-favored ministerial graduate" by several church administrators.

Before coming to Washburn Law, Brazington had several jobs, including two successful positions in sales and marketing. He was also a professional clergy person in upstate New York, overseeing a four-church district in the country near Lake Ontario. "I was the only paid leader in the 300-member district, said Brazington, "So I had some significant responsibility."

But for Brazington the real significance of his work experiences is not so much what he did as what he learned. "Those were all great experiences, but they taught me something important about myself, which is that while I enjoy leading people and can be highly effective at it, my truest passion is to research and write. That's why I went to law school, and I haven't been disappointed."

Not surprisingly, Brazington did his research before deciding to pursue a law degree. He interviewed eighteen practicing attorneys "to find out what they actually did." When they told him they did a lot of research, he knew the legal profession was for him. "For me, spending time researching is a constant fascination," said Brazington. Next he had to decide which law school to attend. To a future legal researcher-writer, the quality of the library was key, and Brazington consulted the ABA guide, which named Washburn's law library number one based on certain criteria. Michael also researched Washburn's G.P.A. and LSAT standards, which he found were even higher than some of the top-50 schools. The school's proximity to his extended family and a scholarship "closed the deal," and Brazington entered law school last fall.

For someone like Brazington who loves the learning process, law school has been a treat. "I have absolutely loved all of my classes because each of them is teaching me how to think logically in such a detailed way." He also praises the professors, the myriad seminar opportunities and, of course, the library. "The library is on the cutting edge, techno speaking," observed Brazington. And he would know.

Kristy L. Khan

Kristy Khan is an avid hockey fan—not surprising since she hales from Edmonton, Canada,



home of the Edmonton Oilers and Wayne "The Great One" Gretzky. When she transferred to the University of New Orleans to complete her undergraduate degree, she took her love of hockey with her and became a big supporter of the former New Orleans Brass. During the 2001-2002 hockey season, Khan was the Brass' promotions intern, assisting with New Orleans-style promotions that included "Dance Like Britney Spears," turkey bowling, and what she describes as an "ill-advised wheelchair relay with pregnant ladies."

In addition to her love of hockey, Khan has always had an interest in the law. After graduating from the University of New Orleans with a B.S. in business administration and management, Khan decided to pursue a law degree. Her brother had attended law school at the University of Toledo, and he gave her some insight into what she might expect at law school. Still, the first year of law school is always an adjustment, and Khan marvels at "the amount of work needed just to keep up and do well."

Despite the workload, Khan has enjoyed her experience at Washburn. "The professors are such interesting people," said Khan. "They are very accomplished and have real world experience to share in class." She also praises the other students, who are always willing to help.

At this point in her legal studies, Khan is not sure what she will do with her law degree, but she knows she wants to use it to help others. She is considering family law because she likes the idea of "helping to keep some family harmony during a hard and trying time in peoples' lives."

When asked what she would tell prospective students about Washburn Law, the one-time promotions intern praises the school's professors, staff and fellow students. "Washburn is a great value. It isn't 'cut-throat competitive' at the school," said Khan. For this hockey fan at least, aggressive competition has only one place: on the ice.

The Centennial Class



Suneetra N. Mickle

By the time Suneetra Mickle graduated from Douglass College at Rutgers, she had already worked in the phar-

maceutical industry for several years. With her degree in public health and years of work experience, she was well prepared for success. But working in an industry that is so heavily regulated by the government, Mickle always felt somewhat hindered by her lack of legal knowledge, so she began to consider law school. Like others who are now part of the Centennial class at Washburn University School of Law, Mickle chose to leave behind a familiar and successful career to chart a new course.

Mickle started working for Johnson & Johnson while still a senior in high school and continued working there through college. As an undergraduate at Douglass, a women's college, she was recognized for her academic excellence as the James Dixon scholar and Merck Kerrigan scholar. She was also actively involved in promoting her alma mater to prospective students in her role as a Red Pine ambassador. After graduating from Douglass, Mickle stayed with Johnson & Johnson for one more year in her job as a contract analyst before taking a position with Merck Pharmaceuticals.

Mickle was employed with Merck for four years as a sales representative. Her outstanding sales record earned her the prestigious Vice President's Award, the company's highest sales award. Having reached the top, Mickle felt she had done all she could in sales. She was ready for a change and decided to leave Merck in order to pursue her law degree.

Washburn Law appealed to Mickle because, among other qualities, it encourages students to achieve success. "Other schools I talked to

didn't encourage succeeding," said Mickle. "The focus was more on failure, not success."

Mickle attributes much of her own success and determination to her father, who has always encouraged her. "He is my go-to person and has always told me that I could do anything I wanted," said Mickle. "He said don't be scared, take chances and push into the unknown."

Mickle wants to provide the same encouragement to other young minority women. By earning her law degree, she hopes to become a role model "to show them you can always go back to school and enter a field that hasn't been a traditional field for minorities or minority women."



Dara E. Montclare

To liken Dara Montclare's journey to Washburn University School of Law to the adventur-

ous journey Bilbo Baggins takes in J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit* would be quite a stretch. But she admits that reading *The Hobbit* as a young woman opened "a whole new world" for her, one that would include educational advancement.

Born in Chicago but raised in Tucson, Arizona, Montclare's early forays into education were less than stellar. "School was never fun for me," said Montclare. "I went to high school and just got by." Nonetheless, after graduating high school, she enrolled at the University of Arizona. Unfortunately, her English composition scores were so bad that she did not qualify for freshman English; instead she was forced to take "English X," a remedial course, which she also did not pass. Discouraged by her college

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experiences, Montclare eventually dropped out of school and “went out on my own.”

Although Montclare had floundered in the classroom, she steadily advanced in the business world. She held a series of jobs and was regularly promoted. At around age twenty-five, a friend gave her a copy of *The Hobbit*. “During school, I hated reading,” said Montclare. “*Scarlet Letter* and *Great Expectations* weren’t my kind of reading, and I truly didn’t know there was anything else. So when my friend handed me *The Hobbit*, it was a whole new world. I started reading voraciously, couldn’t stop. Turns out, it gave me my education in English.”

Montclare would use her self-taught English skills in her work, but she soon found that she could not advance beyond a certain level without a college degree. Eventually she decided to start her own business. With \$20 in her pocket, she opened a cart business selling Thigh Master in the Tucson Mall during the Christmas season. In two months she made \$8,000. Her success would become the foundation of an impressive retail career, and in five years she owned multiple stores grossing \$500,000 annually.

After ten years in retail, Montclare sold the business. She had decided she wanted to go to law school, but first she would have to earn an undergraduate degree, a prospect she describes as “frightening because of my past experiences.” She enrolled as a full-time student at the University of Phoenix. Her first-year G.P.A. was 3.97. The next year she transferred to Arizona State University, where, after her first semester, a teacher pulled her aside and convinced her to become an English major. Three years later, Montclare, who once failed remedial English, graduated summa cum laude with a degree in English literature.

Now a first-year student at Washburn Law, Montclare loves the school. “I love learning, and I like growing,” she said. “And I’m so glad I took English!” Montclare has not settled on a particular area of law yet, but she is certain she will put her degree to good use. “A J.D. opens up so many doors, not just practicing law...doors that were never open [to me] before.”

Eunice C. Peters

As head coach of the Kansas Wheelhawks

wheelchair basketball team, Eunice Peters helped lead her team to victory on the basketball court. Today, the first-year student at Washburn University School of Law finds herself engrossed in court matters of an entirely different kind, but she is no less determined to succeed.

Peters grew up in Chicago and attended the University of Illinois, where she earned a B.S. in kinesiology with an emphasis in athletic training and an M.S. in exercise physiology. While in college, she worked with people with disabilities, including wheelchair athletes. The work was rewarding in many ways, but job opportunities for athletic trainers were limited. So Peters took a job as a legal clerk in Champaign, IL. Although unplanned, it would mark the beginning of her journey to law school.

Peters quickly moved up to the position of sen-



ior legal clerk at the Champaign County Circuit Clerk's office in Urbana, IL. A year later, she accepted the position of motions secretary for the Kansas Court of Appeals, and the following year she became judicial executive assistant to Judge Lee A. Johnson '80. With each successive job, her interest in the law had grown. She had discovered a profession she not only enjoyed but one that offered her many more career opportunities than were available to an athletic trainer.

Peters decision to go to Washburn Law was influenced not only by Washburn's generous scholarship offer but also by the many positive comments she heard from Washburn alumni she knew through work, including Judge Johnson. Now in her first year at Washburn, she understands why they spoke so highly of Washburn Law. "School has been amazing," Peters said. "The professors really care and use different strategies to help everyone learn. They all have open-door policies, which is a great sacrifice for the professors, but it's great for the students."

When she's not studying, Peters helps out with her husband's wheelchair Division 1 basketball team, the Florida Force. She also has a passion for domestic animals and likes to help with rescued dogs.

Although her work experience has given her an inside look at the legal profession, Peters still hasn't decided what area of law she wants to practice when she graduates. "I'm still keeping my options open," she said. "Possibly litigation." Whichever option Peters ultimately chooses, she wants to use her degree to help people. "In the end, it isn't all about money," she said.



Richard A. Samaniego

Richard Samaniego always planned to go to law school. But after graduating in 1999 from the

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University of Texas in Austin with a degree in government and business, he decided to get a job first so he could bring some “real world” work experience to the classroom.

As an undergraduate, Samaniego was able to give his political science studies the “real-world test” in the Texas Legislature. He began there as an intern and then was hired as a legislative aide to Texas Rep. Ron Clark. He served at the Texas capitol for three legislative sessions. Samaniego left after his boss, Rep. Clark, was nominated for a federal judgeship.

One of his early ventures into the business world was with Dell Computer Corporation, where he served as a sales consultant for a year. “It was a good experience,” said Samaniego, “but it wasn’t really what I was in to.” When the economy began to sour and Dell started to lay off employees, Samaniego decided it was a good time to move on. He worked with now-Judge Clark briefly before taking a management position with Enterprise Rent-a-Car.

After working for a couple years, Samaniego decided it was time to pursue his law degree. He applied to a number of law schools, but he chose Washburn. “Washburn impressed me the most. It seemed like they were really interested in me,” said Richard. He had also heard great things about Washburn from his father, whose friend, a lawyer in Richard’s hometown of El Paso, received his law degree from Washburn.

Now in his first year at the Law School, Richard understands why his father’s friend felt so strongly about Washburn Law. “The environment is totally different from other law schools,” said Samaniego, referring to the every-man-for-himself atmosphere he’s heard about from friends at other law schools. “This is an environment in which everyone assists each other, everyone seems to get involved. It feels like you have some ownership in the school.”

Samaniego has found his classes both challenging and enlightening—even, at times, shocking. “I had no idea there was so much leeway in a contractual obligation,” admitted Samaniego, who always thought of a contract

as more cut and dry. In addition to Contracts, he has also enjoyed Property and was surprised with what he learned in Criminal Law. “Now I feel like I understand a whole new part of the world a little better.”

As an undergraduate, Samaniego really liked his business classes, and he looks forward to practicing business law someday, probably in a large corporate setting. Just as his real world experiences helped prepare him for law school, he knows that what he’s learning now will be invaluable when he reenters the world of business.



Rand E. Simmons

Rand Simmons’ skill with foreign language and his appreciation for

other cultures allowed him to study abroad. But it is at home in southwest Kansas, where he has witnessed the barriers faced by non-English-speaking people in his own community, that Simmons believes he can put his skills to their best use. As a bilingual lawyer, Simmons hopes to help bridge the language and cultural divisions in his own backyard.

Simmons received his undergraduate degree in Spanish language and literature from the University of Kansas. While enrolled at K.U., he studied abroad in Guatemala. Following graduation, he quickly put his skills into practice, spending two years working with Cuban refugees in Kansas City. He then moved to Houston, Texas, where his wife was attending school. While there, he served as a Spanish-language translator for three years. Unlike interpreters, who deal with the spoken word, translators deal with written materials. As Simmons describes it, “Translating was sitting in front of a computer and re-typing words. Interpreting was talking with people and relaying what they said to others.” As a computer-bound translator,

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Simmons missed the interaction with people.

Upon returning to Dodge City, Simmons chose to work more closely with people, this time as a Spanish teacher to high school and college students. During his tenure, he also earned an MLS degree at Ft. Hays State. Although Simmons enjoyed teaching at first, he gradually became tired of teaching the same material over and over again. He began talking with his brother and sister, both lawyers, about pursuing a law degree. But before making his decision to invest in law school, Simmons spent six weeks interacting with the Dodge City office of Kansas Legal Services. It became readily apparent that with his Spanish-language skills and a law degree, he could really help people in his community.

Because Simmons wants to practice in Kansas, he applied to law schools in surrounding areas, but found Washburn's admissions office superior to the other schools'. "No other school came close," said Simmons. Now in his first year at Washburn Law, he is equally impressed with the other students, staff and professors. "All of the professors have a passion for teaching... and they go out of their way to make law school enjoyable and comprehensible to everyone," said Simmons.

In the future, Simmons sees himself practicing in the areas of family law and immigration law, probably in a small practice in Dodge City. He is eager to combine his Spanish-speaking skills and his interest in Hispanic culture with his law degree. "I want to help those who had the intestinal fortitude to get to this country and want to be a U.S. citizen and work," said Simmons.



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-Richard A. Samaniego