

Personal Statement for Law School

I waited patiently by the bench in what all Harvey Mudd chemistry majors call the "Super Lab," staring for what seemed to be hours at a small flask bubbling with something that looked like a cross between Pepto-Bismol and whipped cream. I was waiting for the color to turn just the right shade of blue before I could go home for a late dinner, but it was obvious that this solution was as far from blue as baseball is from rugby. I realized then that "Super Lab" was not so Super, and neither was a career as a chemist.

Every summer since high school, I worked at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory as a research assistant. One of my major projects involved working on a team to develop probes for the detection radioactive substances. When I turned in my final report, a computer program that would give the same results in five minutes four people would in a week, my pride turned into disappointment when my supervisor took credit for all of my hard work. Unbeknownst to me, somewhere in tiny print in the contract signed as an employee; it said something to the effect that as an employee I would relinquish all rights to everything that I developed at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. I felt that it was unfair for a company to claim such rights to its employees' innovations and wished to learn more about the issues that surround intellectual property.

I was introduced to the field of intellectual property law in industrial chemistry, taught by Professor Gerald Van Hecke. For my final report, I researched the development of the Gore-Tex fiber by procuring its patent from an online patent service. At that time, I was considering a career in the management sector of the chemical industry because I wanted to be able to use my knowledge of applied chemistry while at the same time work with people. However, once I was introduced to industrial chemistry law, I realized that a career in law would not only incorporate all of my skills but would give me more breadth than

management in a chemical company. Whereas management would limit me to a particular industry, IP law would expose me to a number of industries. IP law would also not confine me to a particular strategy in dealing with problems but force me to develop different strategies based on the industry and the problem that I am dealing with. Law school suddenly became a very attractive career path to me, especially because it would allow me to use my education creatively to help protect the product of peoples' ideas.

Although I am an applied chemistry major, what I have learned as an undergraduate can be applied in many ways to law. Because I have a strong technical background, I have been trained extensively in solving problems both alone and in teams. Although the problems themselves have been technical, the analytical skills that I have acquired in solving such problems can be applied to the world of law. Harvey Mudd's unique engineering clinic program allowed me to work on a team of five students to develop a project plan for General Electric Nuclear Energy to bring the concentration of toxic organic compounds in their waste system down to environmentally safe levels. I have also worked on student teams to solve problems for Habitat for Humanity, and during my summer internships to solve problems for the government. Because I am an applicant from a nontraditional background, I can provide a different perspective to problems encountered in law, and can even introduce vastly different but equally effective approaches to solving these problems.

My technical background is not the only factor that sets me apart from the traditional law school applicant. Because Harvey Mudd balances its technical program with an equally strong emphasis in the humanities, I am not only leaving Mudd with a great education in chemistry but I am leaving Mudd as a technically educated student who is skilled in writing and communication. In addition to possessing a liberal arts background that is unequaled by most technical applicants to law school, I also possess a back-ground that is unique even for a Harvey Mudd student. The typical Harvey Mudd student studies at Mudd for four years, then pursues graduate school in a science or engineering field, and then works in either industry or academia. Unlike the typical Mudd student, I have managed not only to perform well academically, but to take advantage of nonacademic opportunities in order to better balance my life. My experience as the resident assistant of my dorm has given me tools that are necessary to a lawyer such as time management, interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, as well as the ability to effectively deal with crisis situations. Having to juggle my responsibilities as a resident assistant, a student, and an athlete has increased my organizational skills by orders of magnitude. As freshman and sophomore class president, and team leader of an engineering project, I learned how to be more assertive and gained valuable leadership skills in the process. In addition, my membership the National Forensics League and participation in Lincoln-Douglas debates have provided me with the skills of impromptu speech, or communication, and the art of persuasion using sound facts as the basis for arguments.

I finally managed to completely break the mold of the typical Harvey Mudd student by attempting to study abroad for one semester. This was the greatest challenge of my undergraduate career because not many science and engineering majors, let alone Harvey Mudd students, leave to study at foreign institutions. Many attribute this to the specificity of the science curriculum and

the resulting difficulty in finding compatible curricula at foreign institutions. After making use of all the resources possible, I realize that although it is indeed an arduous task to find a university abroad that matches our curriculum to a tee, it is not impossible to do so. After one year of persuading some reluctant administrators to make it easier for a Harvey Mudd student to leave for one semester, I found myself at the University of New South Wales in Australia where I had some of the most valuable experiences in my life. I returned much more independent, and especially aware of the world around me. Upon my return, and due in part to my own example, I discovered that the school had proposed many changes to allow more flexibility in the students' education so that studying abroad would be possible for others who follow me.

I once had the misperception that those who are educated in disciplines such as political science, public policy, or pre-law are more likely to be prepared for a graduate education in law than most other students. Now I believe that a student coming from a more nontraditional background can contribute in many ways to society as a lawyer. In a world where technology is the dominant means of progress and is advancing at such a breakneck pace, it can be a great advantage to society to have knowledgeable people working with laws concerning technology. I not only believe that I am qualified to perform this service to society as a lawyer, but I am convinced that [school withheld] possesses the quality of education and diversity in student body that can best help me fulfill these goals.

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