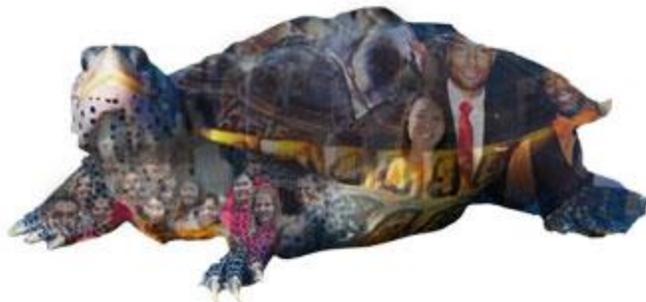


BSOS ALUMNI CAREER PROFILE: EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR

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Lara Fu '17

Executive Coordinator,
Legal Services Corporation
(LSC)

Major: Government &
Politics (International
Relations Concentration)

What do you enjoy most about your current position?

I love that my work is always changing, even from day to day. We have a very fast-paced environment at LSC, particularly in the Executive Office. I've already been exposed to so many different aspects of a non-profit organization and non-profit management, even though I've only been working here since August 2017. Additionally, my colleagues are all extremely smart and driven, and they are always willing to help me develop professionally through new projects and opportunities.

What is a typical day like in your position?

My primary supervisor and LSC's president, Jim Sandman, is extremely busy and involved, so I spend most of my morning organizing his schedule, setting up calls and meetings, preparing his daily folder of materials, managing his external leadership engagements, planning his business trips, conducting research on various topics, and compiling expense reports.

I also support the Vice President of Grants Management, Chief of Staff, and Special Assistant to the President with any projects or tasks they have, from checking invoices against consultant contracts to short-term research/analysis projects to preparing materials for our quarterly board meetings and board events. I'm also going to be assisting on a new software development/survey revision project, which I'm excited about. The Executive Office also has an intern year-round, so I regularly check in with her to review what she's been working on and to give her new projects.

Which undergraduate experiences were helpful in preparing you for your position?

Gemstone Program: I cultivated excellent time management, project management, teamwork, task delegation, and communication skills, in order to produce both a 100-page team thesis encompassing three and a half years' worth of research, and several progress presentations over those years. Those skills have helped a lot in getting things done efficiently and effectively in my position.

Summer internship at Legal Services Corporation (LSC): I started after my junior year. For my first three years in undergrad, I was convinced that I wanted to focus on international development work, because that was where I perceived the greatest need was. However, my internship at LSC showed me how many deeply

entrenched issues we still need to solve at home. You have no right to a lawyer in a civil case, unlike in criminal cases as established in *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), but the outcome of civil cases can have a huge impact on your life, since civil issues include domestic abuse, evictions/foreclosures, and bankruptcy, among many others. I loved the friendly work atmosphere and mission-driven culture at LSC, so when I saw during my final semester at UMD that they had a position opening, I jumped at the chance. The internship provided me with some good insight into the organization and its staff, which I think helped me in the interview process for my current position.

How has your coursework helped you in your current position?

I am one of the youngest full-time employees at LSC, and most of my colleagues have law degrees. Even though my work doesn't require a strong legal background, it's still nice to understand our work, which is all about legal assistance and access to justice. The four law classes I took at Maryland (three GVPT classes with Professor Spivey and a constitutional history class with Professor Ross) provided me with a good, basic foundation. It's funny because I only took my first law class in order to fulfill a major requirement, but I ended up loving it!

Any job or internship tips?

Seek as many internship/out-of-the-classroom experiences as possible, because you never know what will have the most impact or change your career trajectory the most.

- Don't burn bridges; internship supervisors can be great references (and resources) later down the line.
- Work on cultivating your soft skills. Double- and triple-check your résumé for any formatting errors or typos.
- Don't stress out too much about securing a job long before you graduate. The non-profit sector is unlike the business or engineering industries, in that non-profit organizations rarely have regular hiring cycles; instead, they typically hire on an as-needed basis. I began applying to jobs in November of my senior year, but I only heard back about interviews from places I had applied to from February onward. This was a hard lesson to learn because many of my closest friends who were business or engineering majors had their job offers by October, but that's simply not the way non-profit organizations hire.

Final piece of advice?

Make sure to prioritize your academics, but don't stress about getting a B+ versus an A-: at the end of the day, I think that employers care more about your work and leadership experiences than your GPA. Also, remember to enjoy and cherish your time in college! Go to as many Maryland basketball games as possible, hang out on McKeldin Mall on nice days, and spend lots of time with your friends.

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