

UVA LAW | reunion panel

MIKE GILBERT: Thank you, Dean Goluboff, and thanks to the Foundation for organizing this panel. Thanks very much to all of you for being here. My co-panelists and I are very happy to join you this morning and to have a chance to talk to you about the student experience at UVA Law.

As Risa said, my name is Mike Gilbert, and I'm a member of the faculty here. I teach classes on elections and voting and statutory interpretation, and some other topics too. I work hard. My fellow faculty members work hard to try to teach well and make the classroom interesting and engaging and dynamic. I can't promise that we succeed every day, but we try.

And we'd like to think that we're an important part of the student experience here. We are by no means the only part, and we're not necessarily the most important part. The law school has a large and impressive and marvelous student services team that has grown and evolved over time and that does a variety of things to enrich the students' experience to support them, and to make this place what it is.

We have lots of reasons to think that we are successful in terms of the student experience. We hear it from current students. We hear it from alums in settings like this. We get letters and emails and see people out and about. And so we have lots of anecdotal reasons to think that our student experience is a good one.

We also have some other objective indicators too. So I'll just share with you a little statistic that we're all very proud of. The Princeton Review ranks law schools on various dimensions every year, and I'll just give you some recent statistics. This year, we remain number one in Princeton Review's rankings of best professors. We're also number one in best quality of life and number one in the best classroom experience.

[APPLAUSE]

A pause for celebration. So I'm going to tell you further we're happy to say this isn't new. We've been ranked number one in best quality of life for eight years in a row, and we've been ranked number one in best professor for the last five years. So we're doing something right. And the question is, what exactly and how do we do it?

And to help answer that question, we have, as I said, four marvelous members from our Student Affairs team. And we'll just go in order. They'll introduce themselves to you and tell you a little bit about what they do here. And afterwards, I'll pose a few questions to the panel. And then we'll open it up for general conversation.

**MEGAN
DURKEE:**

Good morning. My name is Megan Durkee. I graduated from the law school in 2015, and I'm the director of Student Affairs at the law school. I'm honored to be here, and I'm thankful that you all are here as well. Our office-- the Student Affairs Office does, I would say, three main things.

One is focusing on student support. Two is focusing on student organizations, which Dean Goluboff talked a bit about in her presentation. And then three would be focusing on programming. So for student support, we administer the academic policies at the law school. We also do one-on-one counseling for students for academic support and for personal issues.

So we will meet with students whenever they want. Sometimes it's on an as needed basis, sometimes it's on a more regular basis, and sometimes if students need support beyond what we can offer, we will find resources for students and provide necessary or appropriate referrals. So we work a lot with students, which is definitely the best part of the job.

As far as student organizations, as Dean Goluboff mentioned, there are 70 student organizations at the university. They are very busy and very active. And there's also 10 academic journals, including the *Law Review*. Our office provides logistical support for the organizations.

So we help with funding and reimbursements to help pay for all of the events that they do. We help with event planning support since they put on a lot of events, which is great. They're very responsive to what's going on in the news. So there are a lot of events that they put on, and we provide support with that.

This next year, we're also putting on a more formal leadership training program for student leaders, and members of student organizations to kind of help formalize what they do and bring them together. So they're not just operating as individual organizations. We also, out of our office, organize the Community Fellows and the Peer Advisors Programs. Those are formal mentorship programs for 1Ls, LLM students, and incoming students.

As far as programming, our office plans graduation and orientation, and we put on academic programming throughout the summer and throughout the year. And we also do programming for substance abuse, mental health, wellness, and community building. So in the last school year, our office helped organize about 30 community building-type events for the law school community.

**JENNIFER
HULVEY:**

Thank you, ma'am. Good morning, everyone. My name is Jennifer Hulvey. I am the assistant dean for Financial Aid, Education and Planning. That's a long title for our office. And we added the education and planning recently because we wanted to emphasize that we're not only-- we're not the Financial Aid Office of yesterday.

We start working with students from the time that they are being recruited as prospective applicants. And we have a commitment to lifetime counseling services to all of our alums. So we are really going from the beginning of our contact with a potential UVA Law student, all the way for as long as you might need us. If you want to call and talk to us about how your grandchildren should think about funding law school, we would be delighted to hear from you about that.

And so it's a very comprehensive service in our office with a strong emphasis on counseling. We believe in a retail customer service approach with our students. They're paying a lot of money to be here. We want them to get the maximum value from the student services organizations as well as their overall law school experience.

And so we meet individually with every single student who wants to be met with at any point in time that they want to be met with. And so my office has been described once in a while as aggressively helpful, and I'm really good with that. That's what we want to be.

So we have recently gone from a staff of three to a staff of four. And we're so grateful to the dean's office for that support because obviously, as our counseling services have expanded, we've needed to expand to be able to provide those. We have one position in our office that is dedicated full-time to working with our alums and our Virginia Loan Forgiveness Program that supports our students working in public service.

And to give you an idea of perspective for the 21-22 school year, \$54,600,000 went through the Financial Aid Office from all eight sources to about 846 individual students. And so in a law school where we have about 950 students, we are touching a very large percentage of the population.

And so we start with them before they get here. We will be launching a summer program in June, which we do every year for the incoming students. So they go through financial counseling before they ever start law school on how to do a budget, on how to manage things like credit and credit cards, and not get themselves in trouble before they get started. We will then do counseling with them as one else when they get here.

We provide counseling opportunities and programming throughout their law school career. And then, as 3Ls, we will meet individually with every single graduating student who wants to be met with to talk to them about their individual plan, where they're working, what their salary looks like, what their net paycheck looks like. Taxes are a revelation to some of our students.

And then what their budget needs to look like once they're out in the real world. We offer a real-world finances series in the spring, which I heard Risa mention. And we've been so blessed to have our faculty participate in that as well to make sure that our students are prepared for what life looks like outside of law school.

So that's the new world of Financial Aid. We are co-located with the Admissions Office and work closely with them, as well as the rest of the student services team to make sure that we are addressing the needs of the whole person of the student. So we're glad to see you and glad to have an opportunity to tell you about it. Mark Jefferson.

MARK Oh, thank you. Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to be here to talk with you. I started last March.
JEFFERSON: This is an inaugural role. I'm the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Belonging. I am an Officer 1, but very happy to be of service to the students.

So one of the things that I do is I co-chair the Diversity, Equity, and Belonging Committee with Professor Andrew Hayashi. And over the course of the year, what we've done is focus on a listening tour to talk to various student groups to get a sense of how students feel about their experience at the University of Virginia Law School.

I'm also the director of a new initiative we have called The Roadmap Scholars Initiative, which is the pipeline program that encourages rising juniors to pursue careers in the legal field. We've had extraordinary support from faculty members, from alumni, from staff. And the first class of 13 Roadmap Scholars will be joining us at the beginning of June.

I also work with my colleagues across the student services offices to be a resource. I work one-on-one in terms of counseling students, and I would say that the overall goal of my office is to try to find opportunities and to explore opportunities for students to get to know each other across difference, and also to find ways in which they feel like they are because they are a value part of our University of Virginia Law community.

ANNIE KIM: Great. Thank you. I'm Annie Kim. It's so nice to be here. When I was a law student back in the late '90s-- I'm afraid to admit-- this room was called the Fishbowl Room, and we didn't really have events in here. People just study. So it's always amazing for me to be back here in this role talking with alumni.

I graduated from here in 1999, and we'll talk a little bit about how things were different and how things are the same and a little bit. But I'm really happy to talk with you today. Like my colleagues, we do a lot of work with students individually one-on-one through counseling.

So I had an office called the Mortimer Caplan Public Service Center. And so as Dean Goluboff mentioned, many of our graduates enter jobs that pay them \$215,000 a year. Those are not my graduates.

So our students who are interested in public service are typically interested in government jobs, which can mean federal government, state attorney generals, prosecution to every kind of public interest job, working for the ACLU, nonprofits, a lot of interest in public defenders working on issues of prison reform and criminal justice reform. So those jobs, obviously, do not come with the same kind of paychecks.

And so one aspect of my office's role that's a little bit different from the others you've heard of that is that we also help students figure out how do you get there. Because it's awfully hard if you think about it when all your peers are going off to make so much more money than you and the path is so much more clearly laid out. How do you stick to your guns?

And so a number of years ago, actually, current President Jim Ryan created a program in 2009 called the Program in Law and Public Service. And so that started as a way to try to provide wraparound holistic support, curricular support. So there'd be a class for students who are interested in this, as well as funding, and programming, and other training.

So the thing I do now-- I actually have a hybrid role. So in the last two years, I have been running the Program in Law and Public Service or LPS as well as a Public Service Center. So in the Public Service Center side, I work with a fabulous team of three other attorneys who are career advisors. So we do all the kind of intensive one-on-one counseling that Jennifer's office also does, and that is a big part of our bread and butter.

So a quick show of hands. When you were a student here, did you ever go into the career placement office? Anybody? And I see 22 grads. You don't count. Anybody? All right, OK, a couple of hands, a couple of hands. Our younger graduates.

I went once, one time ever. And it was very demoralizing because I heard I was in the middle of the class, and I didn't really know what I was doing. Back in the day, it was-- I don't want to be too dismissive, but it was fairly easy to get a firm job, and that's pretty much all that most of our graduates were seeking. And today, it's a very different affair.

So especially our more recent grads could acknowledge this, but one of the things that my counselors, my team, and I like to do is work with students intensively to figure out how do you best explain yourself and position yourself so that employers understand who you are and why you want to work with them. And so I was just looking at some records this morning to see we've had some three graduates in 3Ls who all have fabulous jobs. This one's going to a federal agency.

Some students have met with our office since their 1L year 11 times, 16 times, 43 times. 43 times is one I just pulled up this morning. So those are 43, 30-minute or longer meetings that we have with our students. And so these can really go over across the whole gamut. But a lot of them are helping them practice for interviews. So that's part of the fun that we get to do.

The other part I want to mention-- [INAUDIBLE] alluded to this earlier. We also worry about how to provide enough funding to public service students. And so we are incredibly blessed to have the law school to have generous funding largely because of alumni and donors.

And so we have, I think, six or seven in-house selective fellowships just for UVA Law students to help them in different kinds of public service, jobs for the summer to give them support for the summer, as well as a baseline grant program the Dean Goluboff also already mentioned, where everyone else gets \$4,000 who qualifies, and every 2L gets \$7,000. So those are really, really helpful funds to help them start their careers, as well as postgraduate fellowships, in addition.

And so our office helps to administer all of that and works with them to help them get prepared. So that's in a nutshell what we do. I guess we'll talk a little bit more about how we actually work with students.

MIKE GILBERT: Great. Thank you all very much for the introductions and the information. I want to add one item by way of introduction and also just to give a sense of the depth of commitment to students on this panel.

In the middle is Jennifer Hulvey, who introduced herself to you, and she was a 2022 recipient of UVA's John T. Casteen Diversity-Equity-Inclusion Leadership Award, which recognizes and honors members of the university who best demonstrate exemplary leadership and the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Congratulations. It's a very--

[APPLAUSE]

It's a very well deserved recognition, and I think is emblematic of the commitment that the student services team has to the work they do. So I'll take a little time now and pose some questions to the panel. And you can ruminate, and after a little while, we'll open it up to everybody else.

So I want to start with Megan and Annie, both of you are graduates of the law school, and I just thought it might be interesting if you told us a little bit about how the student service or the student experience has changed and how it's stayed the same since you were here?

**MEGAN
DURKEE:**

So I would say, overall, the student experience looks pretty familiar. A lot of the main components are still the same. I mean, there's great professors. I think the education really provides what's needed for students to be good lawyers and to learn the law.

What's different, I think, is a little bit more intangible, and it might have to be-- it might be more of the social component. So I think socially, students are looking a lot more for connection and community building. And they really want something more than just making friends and having fun from a social perspective. So I think that's really interesting, and it could be a sign of the pandemic, but I do think that's a slight change.

The other difference I've noticed would be the students themselves seem to come to law school having thought a bit more about what they want their next three years to look like and beyond. So there's a bit more intentionality, planning, I guess you'd say, but I think students really think seriously about what they want their time here to look like in a way that maybe my class didn't think about so much ahead of time.

ANNIE KIM:

Sure, so the easy answer is that we didn't have slaughter hall as part of our unified law school when I started out in 1996. We had construction barriers, and they were connecting the two buildings. So Caplin Pavilion was going up at the time. But I would echo what Megan said. I think it's all absolutely true.

I think that one of the big things that I see is that now students who come to UVA Law can get every kind of academic experience that are really interested in, whereas before, I think some of the more practical and experiential learning opportunities were just more limited, and that was reflective of how law schools were in general.

But now, we have over 20 clinics where students can get hands-on experience working with actual clients and under practitioner's guidance. They can do a million pro bono activities and are strongly encouraged to do so. That means again going out in the field and working for real clients and causes. So that is huge.

And they're just really-- they're really squared away in a way that I don't feel that my clients, or maybe this is just me, felt at the time. They are very incredibly thoughtful about what they want out of life and their careers, and they're very intentional about it, which makes it very fun to work with them too.

MIKE GILBERT: Jennifer, I want to ask you. You spoke to this a little bit at the outset, but I'll ask you to expand on it a little bit. You've been here for a while. How has financially changed during your tenure?

JENNIFER HULVEY: Sure. So Megan just made the comment about students knowing what they want. And I think about that a lot. I've been in Financial Aid 31 years. I came to the law school in 2009. And I remember talking to many students then, and it was an interesting time to come to the law school. We just had the crash in 2008.

In 2009, we were starting to see the effects of that on the job market. Kevin Donovan, who is our amazing dean of craft services, had started about the same time that I did. And he and I were working closely together with that class. And when I would talk to students then and say, why did you come to law school? A lot of students would say, well, I didn't what to do after undergrad, so I thought I would come to law school.

Yeah, thank you. Thank you for that affirmation. And so as Megan just mentioned, now students are being very thoughtful about that decision. Law school is, in general, wherever they go in any of the top 14 law schools, about a \$300,000 investment. And the students are seeing it as such.

They're thinking about the fact that they're investing \$300,000, whether they're doing that in cash or doing that in student loans. They're investing \$300,000 in this part of their life. So they're being thoughtful about what's going to be my return on that?

Do I really want to work in big law? If I don't, what's going to be the return on paying back debt, for example, if I'm not working in big law? What is Public Service Loan Forgiveness going to look like?

The pandemic, I think, has also really impacted the way students are thinking through this decision. And so I agree that the thoughtfulness is one of the things that has really changed. Obviously, one of the other things that has changed since I've been here it's just the numbers. When I started at the law school in 2009, top market firm salary was \$160,000 a year, and it sat there for a while. And as has been mentioned a couple of times now, this year, we're seeing students at \$215,000.

And so just talking through the sheer numbers and helping students do very detailed budgets, when the 3Ls leave here if they met with us, they actually leave with a household budget that's got their rent and their utilities, and their student loan repayment, and their transportation expenses, and their 401(k), and their health insurance. And all of those things mapped out, at least, in a straw man form for them. And so those numbers have gotten bigger over the years, both with changes in the salary and in changes to how they're funding law school.

The other thing that I see that I will just mention briefly is-- and some of this is chicken and egg-- students are seeking a lot more in terms of counseling services. And some of that may be because we're offering the counseling services, and I'm really glad about that. But I sat down this week with at least two different incoming students and mapped out what their student loan payments would look like when they graduated.

And so they haven't even started law school yet, and we've already mapped out what their post law school picture might look like. And I don't recall having those kinds of questions with students back in 2009 and 2010. So I think those are some of the things we've seen change with Financial Aid.

MIKE GILBERT: Thank you. My next question goes to the whole panel, though, I'll ask Mark to start, and it's about a balancing act that we face at the law school, and I feel it. I especially feel it now in this administrative position. I interact with students in various ways that I didn't before, but I think everybody does.

The balancing act is this. On the one hand, we have lots of smart students who we welcome into the place and who we want to support, and they need support in various ways. At the same time, part of our job as a law school is to professionalize the students and to get them ready for professional practice.

And there is sometimes a tension here between trying to support people and hold hands and advise, and on the other hand, expose people to the real world and what it's going to look like when you're in practice. And if you're late, the judge doesn't care, and a variety of other circumstances like this come up.

And I just think we all face a little tension, a little bit [INAUDIBLE] in this respect. And I would like to invite the panel to comment on this and how you observe it and how you think about it. And Mark, maybe we can start with you.

MARK JEFFERSON: I spent a lot of time with students both in school and outside of school. I'm a firm believer in food diplomacy, and so students here now that they will be offered a range of options-- breakfast, lunch, or early dinner.

I think Dean Gilbert like-- I don't, I think students noticed I spent a lot of time calling students counselors. Even when I interact with them in terms of my emails, I always thank them for their time. The small things that I try to do in terms of just my interactions, it's a prompt in their minds that they are joining a guild in a certain sense of profession.

I never take for granted. I always tell students like, we know you're business, like, no, no, no, I don't have to take exams. You're much busier than I am counselor, so on, and so forth. So I think some of it is just in the casual interactions. I'm always looking for opportunities to remind them that you are joining a legal profession.

When students come to me and talk about time management, for example, I generally like to do an exercise with them that goes, how many hours in a week? 168. How many times are you in class? 18 hours. Do you sleep eight hours a night? I know you don't, but you should.

And then leaves you with like 96 waking hours. You have time. You probably don't know how to use it. But you need to know how to use it because you're going to join a profession that is very time-sensitive, very time-conscious.

So I think some of finding in the balancing act for me is in most of my engagements with students I'm always looking for an opportunity to link it to this future profession. And I try not to give in to what they say because all our students say I don't have enough time. In five years, you're going to long for the days that you were in law school. Like you had to read cases because like you didn't want to be unprepared for the Goluboff's class.

When like deals are being closed and you thought that you were going through the show on Saturday night, but it's not happening because you're-- senior associate just called you to say, yeah, that thing that we thought might happen it happened. The client needs it on Monday.

So I mean, I think that my general approach to students is, again, to look for opportunities to connect what they're doing now to what they're going to do in the future. And even when it comes to difficult topics, make the sense that we have to assume their faith and extend it, and so on, and so forth. It's just a normal part of how I talk to students counselors.

ANNIE KIM: Yeah. So I agree with what Mark said. I'm just thinking right now about some of the conversations we have with our alumni actually when we counsel them because we do counsel a lot of alumni. Typically, they're at a firm, or they're coming off a clerkship, and they want to make a transition.

And so when you think about it, the ability to make of your life what you want is the most important thing for any graduate of the school. Then to make money, enough money-- similarly important. And so sometimes that puts students and alumni in difficult positions where they have to make tough choices. And so we really enjoy those conversations, but they can be hard.

So they might be questions about how do you leave employment? How do you say no? When do you say yes? And those are really, really complicated conversations. If any of you have been in-house counsel or government attorneys-- I was a local government attorney for a number of years.

Working with your clients in-house requires a similar kind of balance striking because you want to encourage them and support them, but you also want to explain what the standards are in the profession and try to raise them up as well. So it is a daily balancing act for sure.

But one thing I think that all of us probably at the table would agree with is that if you have a foundational trust and relationship with that student or alumnus, that goes an incredible distance. We have had-- I've had so many difficult tear-filled, angry conversations where there's a lot of emotion there, but we're able to get through it because we have paved that foundation. And they know that we trust them, we respect them, and we care about them. We want them to do well.

So we look at that almost in an attorney-client kind of context but with added benefits where we are really trying to do what's in their best interest and teach them some of the standards of the profession, which is not easy. But that is one of the more enjoyable parts of the job, trying to figure out where do you draw that line.

MIKE GILBERT: Jennifer.

**JENNIFER
HULVEY:**

I would second something that Annie just said. One of the things that's at the core of what we do is creating the relationship with the student. And I have Martha Ballenger in my sights here in the audience. And when I started at the law school, she was our dean for Student Affairs, and I learned so much from [INAUDIBLE] Ballenger.

And one of those things was creating that relationship because that then becomes very important when you have to have that hard conversation. I mean, we have some hard conversations, as Annie just said. Some of the hard conversations we have are around deadlines and around also making accurate statements. And so those are things that, as we work with the students, we want to make sure they know.

One of the other things that we do just getting them ready for the professional world is we offer a session, a seminar, or a workshop on things like how to analyze employee benefits and what kind of insurance you need to have, and long-term disability insurance, and how to manage a 401(k), and what a 401(k) is and how that's different from a Roth.

And students are like, wow, this is adulting. It is, and we think that's really important.

[LAUGHTER]

**MEGAN
DURKEE:**

So I guess and thinking about the balance between providing support and sort of the professionalization of going into the legal profession. I don't necessarily think those two are mutually exclusive. I think in our office and Student Affairs, what we try to do when we provide support, whether that's individual counseling or programming or anything like that, I think our goals are to help students develop good habits that they can take with them into the profession.

And sometimes, even a purely social event can help them build the habit of getting out of the library and prioritizing their time, and knowing that building relationships is also being a part of-- is also a part of being an effective legal professional. So I think habit building is something that is really important, and that's something we do to provide support, but it's designed to help students be good lawyers.

I think relationship building is also really important with these events that students have, whether it's a student organization event about a specific topic or whether it is a social community-building event. It is important for students to have strong relationships with their classmates here because those relationships will give a foundation when they're lawyers and when they're struggling.

The people they meet here them well and also will know the profession. And so when they do inevitably come against challenges later, we're hoping that they'll be able to fall back on those relationships and good habits that they build here.

MIKE GILBERT: Thank you for that. I'll ask one last question before opening it up. And I'll pitch it first to Mark, and then maybe others will weigh in. I'm curious what your experience is like with respect to student needs and student support and COVID. And some of you have spoken to this a little bit, but I think there's possibly much more to say.

It's been a very complicated time, and I should say too, Mark is quite new to our law school. He's been here for a year, but prior to that he was at Harvard Law School. We're very lucky and happy to have poached him. So you've seen COVID all the way through, even though you weren't here the whole time, and I just wonder how it's affected your work.

MARK
JEFFERSON: That's an excellent question. My former school up North, we were full-time on Zoom. So it became extraordinarily challenging, and I became aware of it because a lot of my work is one-on-one with students and so on. In an order I think to effectively counsel people, you want to be like in their presence, in their company to be able to literally feel their body language.

And so like the first thing that I noticed very soon into the pandemic was like my spider sense was off because I couldn't completely read what you were feeling, and so you had to be more direct in terms of asking questions the kinds of questions that you may not necessarily have to ask because of how someone interacts with you. And I started here on Zoom. It's interesting.

So some of it professionally was just to think about the different ways that we can do work and how we adapt as human beings, and so on, and so forth. I literally turned in my laptop from my previous law school, and I got a laptop from UVA. And now, in the same apartment in Boston, I officially work at the University of Virginia Law School.

In terms of interacting with students, my first interaction with students at UVA was through Zoom, and you could sense that they very much enjoy the hybrid experience or at least the attempt they were certainly aware of the fact that I had just left a school that didn't have that experience. They had a deep appreciation.

But it was very challenging for them to get to each other in the kinds of casual ways that students get to know each other. Like so much of what happens, I think, in law school, so much of what you learn is a relationship to conversations with your colleagues-- the discussion that happened in class, that continues after class in the hallway like they point you made was an extraordinary point.

So I think, as an overall matter, one of the things that was lost as a consequence of pandemic was serendipity-- that conversation that turns into the all-night conversation that turns into now I have a new friend. And you could feel that our students as I got to know them and join the community, especially that first class they were really struggling with-- they wouldn't have named it that way.

But to me, they were struggling with the absence of serendipity and the casual ways in which we get to each other, and the conversations that happen that aren't scripted. At the same time, like I think that they did an extraordinary job just making it through. I feel like, at times, I've had to remind students that you're much more resilient than you're giving yourself credit for.

A brief story-- I love to tell stories. My mom's younger sister and my mom's family are very strong swimmers, and she's a water safety instructor. She would give me different lessons and so on and so forth at like six or seven years old. And she would always point to the deep end.

She was like, eventually, you have to get the deep. And I'm not going to get into the deep end. That's never going to happen. And then a certain point, she decided that--

AUDIENCE: --to microphone.

MARK Yes, at a certain point, she decided that you're actually going into the deep end. And she pushed me into the deep end, and she knew being a water safety instructor, I would go down and come up, and my natural reaction would be to begin to tread. And I said to her, I'm drowning, I'm drowning. You have to save me. She said, no, you're talking to me.

[APPLAUSE]

You're fine. And so I feel like part of what I've tried to do is to affirm this sense of dislocation as students have had, but within the larger context of how extraordinarily brave and resilient, you all have been like you've actually made it through.

MIKE GILBERT: Would anybody else like to comment on the COVID challenge?

JENNIFER HULVEY: We've had a lot of changes that have impacted financially. And that's in very practical sort of terms and also the student experience, which Dean Jefferson just alluded to. One of the most prominent things and you all have probably read this in the newspaper, is since March of 2020, there has been a pause on student loan interest accumulation by the Department of Education and also a voluntary pause for students on having to make any student loan payments.

So I literally now have three classes of students-- the class of 2020, the class of 2021, in the class of 2022 who will have graduated without having to go into student loan repayment. So that has a lot of impacts on our counseling. That has also deeply impacted our Virginia Loan Forgiveness Program.

Students working in public service during that time could get credit towards Public Service Loan Forgiveness, but it made-- it obviously completely upended our administration of benefits through the Virginia Loan Forgiveness Program because if you're not making student loan payments, you're not getting benefits.

And so students could voluntarily choose to make student loan payments, although that didn't make much sense for our public service students. But students who did we were working with individually on that. So an intense amount of counseling around what was going on with the student loan interest pause.

You all have obviously also heard in the news, I'm sure, about the possibility of some student loan forgiveness out of this administration. And without going into any of the politics on that, let's just say I've had a lot of conversations about that, including some students who ask me if they should borrow more so that they could get it forgiven, which we're actively discouraging.

Some of the more-- current student-focused things were just making sure that during the pandemic that everybody had the support that they needed, and that went a lot of different ways. We had some students living at home with their parents where that wasn't a comfortable situation for the students or the parents and figuring out what sort of support they needed during that time.

I had students during the pandemic who wanted to support their families with their financial aid because their parents had been laid off from jobs or had other crises that they were dealing with. We were administering some emergency funding for students. We stood that program up pretty quickly and with great support from the dean's office, for which we were very grateful, and figuring out what the needs were and how we could best meet them.

And so it's been a very intense time for us in terms of counseling and helping students navigate financially what this pandemic is looking like for them and their families.

MIKE GILBERT: So I'll interject just to say Dean Goluboff might have mentioned this earlier. I'm not sure, but the law school has worked very hard throughout COVID to continue to offer the students an in-person experience. We believe that's very important to their education and to their experience here. The students tell us the same thing.

This involved for a whole year and a range of classes a hybrid offering, which meant the professor is standing in front of the room with a camera in their face and some students in the room and other students on Zoom. And it was a little clunky sometimes, but all things considered, we believed it was better than Zoom only, and the students overwhelmingly agreed with that position. And lots of other law schools didn't or weren't able to pull that off, and we did it. And we're happy about it and proud of it.