

THE MORE YOU KNOW - DUAL BACKGROUNDS AND THE PRACTICE OF LAW

THE CORE ASSET: PERSONNEL

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Do you know any lawyers who also hold an MD? Or perhaps an engineer, biologist, CPA, or computer science whiz who practices law? Today, holding a dual degree in the areas of economics, life sciences, or engineering can definitely give you an edge whether applying for a job in a multi-disciplinary or niche law firm, or in the corporate world. We will examine how holding a degree in a sought-after discipline, in addition to your JD, can definitely open doors for you.

A Growing Trend Among Law Students

There is an increasing demand for co-profession specialization in law practice, and law students are preparing themselves to meet that need by obtaining specialized degrees in addition to their Juris Doctor degrees. Acknowledging this change in the legal market, law schools are responding by offering joint-degree programs, enabling students to earn two degrees during the same years of study. Since law schools do not offer other professional courses of study aside from law (with the possible exception of parallel public accounting and patent studies being offered), the JD-granting institution commonly forms a joint program with a neighboring university so that the student can simultaneously be enrolled in both degrees at their respective campuses.

Advantages for Students

There are various benefits for a law student in earning a joint degree while studying law, such as financial aid considerations and length of time to complete the desired education. A JD degree typically requires a three-year course of study, and an MBA usually requires an additional two years. However, combining a JD and an MBA in a joint program allows the student to complete both degrees over a four-year period.

In addition, there are professional development advantages that accrue from participation in a joint program. These are not just

by way of social and interpersonal development of the student who mingles in two different environments or campuses, but also by way of the increase in networking opportunities while still in law school that accompany such an expanded circle of friends and acquaintances.

Preference in Employment

A law degree combined with various master's degrees makes the degree holder much more valuable to the law firm or business enterprise that needs both skills in one person. Certainly, in the area of Patent Law, law firms dealing with patent prosecutions involving biologics, drugs, medical devices, and the patenting of new treatments will want an attorney with a degree in Biology, Chemistry, or a related field on their team. New Drug Applications (NDAs) tendered to the FDA will need to be prepared by an attorney who knows both the workings of the administrative agency as well as the science behind the drug approval being applied for.

Besides, in the increasingly regulated world of banking and finance, a JD possessing a CPA, or a degree in Economics or Finance, will be able to get up to speed practically from day one at the law firm fortunate enough to hire that candidate. On the business side, a 2012 US News study found that of 498 Fortune500 CEOs reviewed, 46, i.e., a little over 9%, held JD degrees, and a 2017 study of CEOs holding JD degrees concluded that their companies were less likely to be

bogged down with protracted litigation.

Two explanations were offered for this correlation:

(1) These CEOs were taught how to make strategic legal decisions that benefited their companies resulting in less litigation, or

(2) Companies with less propensity for litigation in the first place preferred to hire CEOs with legal training

Regardless of the cause, the reduction in litigation was found to be consistent with active risk management by the CEO.

Law and Technology

The patenting of software applications—and the abundance of protracted litigation arising therefrom—has opened the door to lawyers who can combine their legal training with a Computer Science background. Even though the litigator cannot be called upon as the expert witness in the case, it certainly helps a litigating party to have on their side a lawyer who not only knows what to look for but who knows how to 'speak the same language' as the witness being called to opine on algorithms, cybersecurity, and disputed code misappropriation. As AI rapidly emerges as an applied science to be found in almost all technology used by mankind, accompanying issues of Human Rights, Privacy, and Accountability are coming to the fore and will need experts in Law and Technology to address and resolve these issues.

Public Health Law

Even before the COVID-19 public health emergency, a significant demand existed for lawyers who could work in the health field, whether as advocates for disabled patients utilizing a Social Work or Psychology degree, counsel to insurance companies employing their medical or rehabilitation skills to arrive at settlements and weed out insurance fraud, or as professionals associated with public health agencies or as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) advisors to healthcare providers having an understanding of Public Health. With the advent of the pandemic, the demand has increased for lawyers who can also address legal-epidemiological implications of everything, from mask mandates to business closures.

Zeroing In

A common refrain heard from students who are enrolled in dual-degree programs is that they have a keen sense of where they want to go in their careers and hence exactly what training they will need to achieve their goals. In fact, even while enrolled in their combination JD and second-degree programs, many of them seek out summer internships or clerkships early on during their academic careers so as to get a foot in the door in the field, or perhaps even in the exact firm or organization, where they wish to practice their chosen profession.

Regardless of what degree combination today's law student assembles for herself or himself, an increasing demand exists in the marketplace for the dual-degreed professional possessing cross-disciplinary academic credentials.

Executive Summary

1. The Issue

How can today's law students best prepare for emerging career opportunities, whether with a law firm, business enterprise, or private organization?

2. The Gravamen

Greater opportunity awaits the law graduate possessing a dual degree than those entering the legal marketplace without an auxiliary professional degree to offer to an employer.

3. The Path Forward

Even before applying to law school, try to zero in on just where you want your career path to go and select a combined program that will provide you with the credentials you will need for that career.



Action Items:

1 Zero in:

Although not easy for most people to answer early on in their academic career, ask yourself the compelling question, 'What do I want to be when I grow up?' and then research just what will it take in terms of training to get you there.

2 Deciding on the combination:

Once you have set acquiring a JD as part of your goal, investigate what accompanying degree will best equip you to work in your chosen field of law or business.

3 Mind the market:

Keep track of what recruiters have to say about the demand in the marketplace for lawyers with dual degrees.

4 Networking:

Take advantage of the tremendous opportunity inherent in a dual-enrollment environment to network with fellow students, faculty, and other contacts you will meet to start advancing your career even before obtaining your degrees.

Further Readings

1. <https://careers.findlaw.com/legal-career-assessment/are-two-better-than-one.html>
2. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/articles/2012/06/26/where-the-fortune-500-ceos-went-to-law-school>
3. <https://studylink.com/articles/double-or-nothing-studying-a-combined-law-degree/>
4. <https://www.collegesoflaw.edu/blog/2018/01/09/three-benefits-dual-degree-law-psychology/>



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After receiving his Juris Doctor degree from The John Marshall Law School in Chicago, Mr. Brochin served as an Administrative Law Judge with the Illinois Department of Labor for six years where he presided over cases dealing with job separation issues and matters pertaining to contested Unemployment Insurance claims. He also co-wrote the agency's administrative rules, and periodically served as a 'ghost writer' for Board of Review decisions. Following that position, he was Director of Development for a Chicago-area non-profit college where he was responsible for High Net Worth donations to the institution. For the next eighteen years he practiced as a solo practitioner attorney with an emphasis in the fields of Real Estate law and Commercial Contracts transactions, and was an agent for several national title insurance agencies.

In 2003 he was recruited to head up a U.S. title insurance research office in Israel, a position he held for four years, and between 2007-2017 he participated in litigation support for several high-profile cases. He has taught Business Law as a faculty member of the Jerusalem College of Technology, and has authored a wide variety of legal White Papers and timely legal articles as a professional legal content writer for GPL clients. Separate from his legal writing, he has co-authored academic articles on Middle East security topics that have been published in peer-reviewed publications.



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William Anderson is Managing Director and Head of Law & Compliance. He leads the GreenPoint practice in providing regulatory, legal, and technology solutions to law firms, legal publishers, and in-house law departments around the world, overseeing our team of experienced US attorneys and data and technology experts. Will has over 25 years' experience working with corporations to improve the management of their legal and corporate compliance functions. Will began his legal career as a litigator with a predecessor firm to Drinker, Biddle LLP. He then served as in-house counsel to Andersen Consulting LLP, managing risk and working with outside counsel on active litigation involving the firm.

Will has leveraged his legal experience interpreting regulations and appearing before federal (DOJ, SEC, FTC) and state agencies (NYAG) to oversee research and other areas at Bear Stearns. In this capacity, he counseled analysts on regulatory risk and evolving compliance requirements. Will also consulted on the development of a proprietary tool to ensure effective documentation of compliance clearance of research reports. Will then went on to work in product development and content creation for a global online compliance development firm pioneering the dynamic updating of regulated firms' policies and procedures from online updates and resources. Will holds a Juris Doctorate with High Honors from the Washington University School of Law in Saint Louis and is admitted to state and federal bars. He lives in Pawling, NY, with his wife and daughter.



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