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## Scholarship recipients bring broad backgrounds

August 26, 2013

A world-class gymnast determined to pursue land rights for the world's poor. A legal outreach worker who relied on "the coconut wireless," or word of mouth, to communicate with homeless clients on the beaches of Oahu. An international businessman eager to learn more about the laws that govern corporations.

These are the 2013-14 full-tuition scholarship recipients at Seattle University School of Law. My-Lan Dodd and Miranda Maurmann received Scholars for Justice Awards ([/office-and-administration/student-financial-services/financial-aid-programs/scholarships/scholars-for-justice-award](#)), granted to two top students each year who are committed to working in the public interest. Adam Star was selected for the Adolf A. Berle, Jr. Scholarship ([/x6501.xml](#)), which is given to a student who has a keen intellectual interest in understanding the modern corporation and its intersection with law and society.

Dodd and Star began classes over the summer with the law school's Part-Time Program ([/admission/prospective/enrollment-options/part-time](#)), and will continue their careers as they pursue legal degrees. Maurmann began studies in the fall.



Dodd, 30, is a Seattle native who chose the law school specifically for its emphasis on social justice. Since 2008, she has worked with Seattle-based Landesa, an organization that works to secure land rights for the world's poorest people. Her passion is inspired by her own mother's stories of her impoverished childhood in Vietnam, during the war.

"I hope to use my degree to help advance pro-poor land tenure reform in the developing world," she said. A better understanding of property law, contract law, comparative law, and how to draft legislation will make her "able to help secure legal rights to land for poor rural communities so that they can thrive."

She hopes to follow in the footsteps of Roy Prosterman, the founder of Landesa, whose research in her mother's home country uncovered the fact that when rural farmers had legal rights to their land, they

were far less vulnerable to Viet Cong recruitment.

Dodd received a master's degree in social sciences from the University of Chicago in 2011 and her B.A. in 2006 from the University of California, Berkeley, where she also led the Division 1 women's gymnastics team.



Maurmann, 25, graduated from University of Washington with a B.A. in law, societies, and justice in 2010. She spent the last two years working with the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, where she helped low-income clients navigate issues such as custody, child support, divorce, troubles with state and federal public benefits, and charges of welfare fraud.

When Maurmann thinks about why she wants to become a lawyer, she remembers a 19-year-old woman she helped in Hawaii. She was a victim of sexual abuse seeking a divorce from her husband, the abuser.

"Cases like that really spoke to me," she said. "Without being an attorney, there's only so much I could do to help. I could do document prep, I could advise her of her rights, tell her what to expect. Thankfully, her case went well and she got the divorce. But if it hadn't, I wouldn't have been able to do anything other than beg my boss to take the case."

Hawaii wasn't Maurmann's first foray into the legal world. She also served as a community court probation intern with Seattle Municipal Court in 2010. There, she admired a court model that offered rehabilitation rather than jail time. Non-violent offenders were directed to social service agencies, where they got the support they needed.



Star, 31, a native of Farmingdale, N.Y., and an alumnus of Cornell University, considered law school when he graduated in 2004, but took a detour through the world of business first. For eight years, he worked at Abercrombie & Fitch headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, where he was a senior merchandise planner.

He left Ohio to take a new job as a manager with Amazon.com, where he discovered that a flexible work schedule, combined with Seattle University's Part-Time Program, would let him achieve his goal of law school.

"After taking summer classes, and the reading I've started for the fall, I can already see that the legal component is the piece of the picture I've been missing in business," he said. "It's what sets the rules and structure for corporations. Now I can really understand what's shaping the business environment."

Star's eventual goal is to move into arbitration or mediation once he has a legal degree - possibly still at Amazon. His interest stems from hearing his grandfather's stories of labor battles led by the United Auto Workers during his life-long career at Ford Motor Co., but he's also been inspired by his father's entrepreneurial career as the owner of an electrical supply company.

Star is particularly interested in the role that multinational corporations play as representatives of

American values and culture. Both Abercrombie & Fitch and Amazon.com have faced high-profile legal challenges in the areas of discriminatory hiring and pricing, which has given Star a view of those legal issues from the inside.

A law degree, he said, will allow him to bridge those two worlds — understanding the laws that limit a corporation's behavior while at the same time understanding the business motivations behind that behavior.

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