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# The Class of 2016: Variety is the Spice of Law School Life

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# THE CLASS OF 2016:

## VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LAW SCHOOL LIFE

BY JONELLA FRANK

The College of Law welcomed a new group of first-year students on August 15. They began their law school experience with a two-day orientation period prior to the official start of the semester. The 143 men and women of the Class of 2016 brought with them a variety of experiences, perspectives and interests. Read about a few members of the class to discover the caliber of students attending your law school who will soon join you as OU Law alumni.

### MELISSA COWLE

Dallas  
Southern Methodist University –  
B.A., Political Science



Intellectual stimulation coupled with the ability to have an impact on the lives of others led **Melissa Cowle** to pursue a legal education. "I have wanted to be an attorney since I was a little girl, so attending law school has always been part of my life plan," she said.

A member of the varsity soccer team at Southern Methodist University, Cowle was an undergraduate major in political science with minors in sociology and human rights. Adding a law degree seemed like a perfect fit.

When contemplating where she would attend law school, Cowle considered a variety of factors in making her decision. "OU Law's small class size, outstanding reputation, and proximity to my home state of Texas appealed to me," she said. "Because I am interested in pursuing a career in litigation or oil and gas law, one of the areas in which OU Law really excels, my final decision was an easy one."

**KATIE EISSENSTAT**

Oklahoma City  
Oklahoma City University –  
B.M., Musical Theater



“Without OU Law, I might never have been born!” replied **Katie Eissenstat** explaining why she chose to attend law school here. “I have always had a special place in my heart for this university because it is where my parents met.”

Eissenstat’s father, mother and uncle are all graduates of the OU College of Law and helped inspire her to pursue a law degree. In addition to her family connections, she chose OU Law due for several other reasons, including “the incredibly helpful faculty, the quality of life, and the top-notch education OU provides at an affordable price.”

Eissenstat looks forward to utilizing her legal education to serve others. “I want to help people solve difficult problems and make their lives a little easier, all while challenging myself both intellectually and emotionally.”

Coming from an undergraduate performing arts background, Eissenstat has learned to creatively improvise and think on her feet. She believes that creativity, along with public speaking skills developed through a theater background, will serve her well during her years at OU Law and beyond.

**DANIEL FRANKLIN**

Habersham, Georgia  
University of Oklahoma –  
B.S., Multidisciplinary Studies and  
M.Ed., Adult and Higher Education  
(Intercollegiate Athletics Administration)



**Daniel Franklin** was a member of the University of Oklahoma football team, lettering each of his four years. After graduate school, he worked as a landman for an Oklahoma land services company. He enjoyed the legal research and curative title work the job required. “I soon discovered a J.D. could open doors in the energy industry,” said Franklin. “The prospect of new opportunities and the chance to develop a unique skill set are what initially drew me to law school.”

Franklin explained there were several reasons for his decision to attend OU Law. “My primary reason, was because it is a great law school with very reasonable tuition rates. But also, because I completed my master’s and undergraduate degrees at OU, as well as competed as a student athlete, all of which were incredible experiences, I could not imagine spending three more years at any other university.”

## KAITLIN HIGGINBOTHAM

Norman, Oklahoma  
Redlands Community College –  
A.A., Business Administration  
Coastal Carolina University –  
B.S., Business Management



Family ties to the University of Oklahoma pulled on **Kaitlin Higginbotham** when she was selecting a law school. Higginbotham played college golf, first at an Oklahoma community college, where her team won the 2009 National Junior College Athletic Association National Championship, and later at a South Carolina university. But once her decision to study law was made, her hometown's university was where she

wanted to go.

"I chose OU Law, specifically, because it is one of the top-ranked law schools in the country, and because my father graduated from OU Law in 1990 and my mother went to OU to get her bachelor's degree," Higginbotham said. "I really wanted to come back home to be a Sooner and attend their alma mater."

For Higginbotham, a law degree will allow her to pursue a career working with people to change lives. "I also wanted a degree that would set me apart when looking for starting positions with different companies and organizations," she explained. "I feel having a J.D. will allow me to choose from a wide variety of careers."

## JASON HUBBERT

Oklahoma City  
Southern Nazarene University –  
B.S., Christian Education and  
M.A., Religion and  
Old Testament



A long-held interest in the law eventually led **Jason Hubbert** to OU Law. "I have always been fascinated by law and the way law shapes and is shaped by a community," he said. "After eight years in education, it was time to make a change, and I was looking for a versatile degree that would open doors in a variety of areas."

"Having lived in Oklahoma City for nine years, I am excited about the future here and want to take a part in it," explained Hubbert about why he chose OU Law. "After talking to several attorneys in Oklahoma and this region, I decided no law school would better prepare and position me to serve the needs of this state than OU."

**TOM HUBBERT**

Holly, Michigan  
Lake Superior State University –  
B.S., Political Science



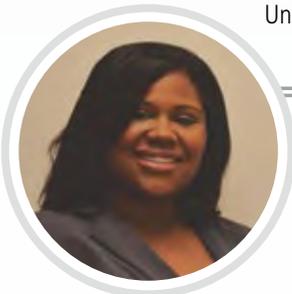
"I wanted to be a lawyer after the first time I read a John Grisham novel," **Tom Hubbert** said. Taking logic and law classes as an undergraduate solidified this desire. "I really knew the law was the right path for me."

"I decided to come to OU because I saw a documentary ["The Trials of Law School" by Porter Heath Morgan ('04)] that showcased a group of 1Ls through their first year of law school," explained Hubbert. "I researched and visited, and the admissions staff, the professors, and the students were all so friendly and welcoming that I was instantly comfortable about coming to OU."

Hubbert, a music lover who enjoys looking for new artists and sounds he hasn't previously heard, said his favorite thing about OU Law is the people. "The students are friendly, and the staff is excellent. The administration will do anything they can to help you, whether you need a favor or just a friendly conversation to brighten your day."

**GE'ANDRA JOHNSON**

Oklahoma City  
Oklahoma State University –  
B.A., Psychology  
University of Central Oklahoma –  
M.A., General Psychology



A desire to impact the world in a positive way motivated **Ge'Andra Johnson** to attend law school. "I find joy in helping others," explained Johnson. "I believe earning a law degree will be instrumental in allowing me to better advocate for those who may not have all the tools necessary to be able to help themselves."

Two qualities of the legal education provided at the University of Oklahoma College of Law are of particular interest to Johnson. "I chose OU Law because both the strong sense of community and the focus on service align well with my personal values," she said.

Cognizant of the richness of diversity within her law school class, Johnson listed her contribution to the group personality of the Class of 2016. "I think my academic and industrial background in psychology allows me to offer a unique perspective to the group."

### **SAMUEL J. MERCHANT**

Oklahoma City  
University of Central Oklahoma –  
B.A., Philosophy



**Samuel Merchant** hit the ground running out of high school and hasn't slowed down. At the age of 19, he opened his first business, and at 20, he acquired another. He has been a research assistant, as well as a teaching assistant, and currently serves as president of the OU Law Class of 2016.

After working in business sales and consulting, his desire for a more rewarding career led him to law school. "I believe this profession is fulfilling in that it provides a unique and meaningful service to individuals, businesses and society in general," Merchant explained.

Although originally from Oklahoma City, he has lived in many states across the country. When it came to choosing a law school, Merchant said he was drawn back to Oklahoma. "I love this state, and I wanted to receive the state's premier legal education so I could be the best advocate for future clients. I was also drawn to OU Law by its distinguished alumni across this state and country, and will work to make my place among them. "

### **VILARD MULLALIU**

Rahovec, Kosova, and Edmond, Oklahoma  
University of Central Oklahoma –  
B.B.A., Business Administration



As a young child in Kosova, **Vilard Mullaliu** experienced first-hand the terror of war, running from tank and sniper fire on the streets of Rahovec. At the age of 10, he immigrated to the United States with his family, settling in Edmond, Oklahoma, where he began the process of learning the language and culture of his new home.

His early life experiences helped direct the path he embarked upon after college. "I always had a general interest in pursuing a legal education when I was young," Mullaliu said. "My experiences as an immigrant and courses in international business law further increased my interest and motivated me to pursue a legal education."

Fluent in four languages, Mullaliu was attracted to OU Law because of its reputation. "Upon touring the facilities and meeting the staff, I was certain OU would provide me with an excellent education and exemplary support to become a successful attorney," he commented. "Everyone is genuinely friendly and interested in helping you progress as a student and person. I am also very fond of the sense of pride and importance you feel being a part of the OU College of Law family."

### KRISTIN NEWMAN

Keller, Texas  
Texas Christian University –  
B.B.A., Marketing and  
Entrepreneurial



Since childhood, **Kristin Newman** has known she wanted to study and earn an advanced degree – in something. She explained how she decided the degree would be a juris doctor. “Once I figured out what my passions were, I decided a law degree would be the best way to further those passions.”

During the process of visiting law schools and deciding where to attend, OU Law stood out. “From the minute my family and I started communicating with the admissions staff, they were more than helpful, very informed, and quick to respond,” said Newman. “When I toured OU Law, everyone seemed to truly enjoy being a part of the school. Why wouldn’t you choose OU Law?”

Newman mentioned three of her personality traits, which have already come into play in law school. She’s not afraid to take initiative (she served as the social media marketing director for a PGA golf tournament), she supports her community (the social media job was a volunteer position), and she loves sports and the lessons learned through them (she can name every NFL and MLB team). Explaining how those characteristics have been beneficial, Newman said, “Thus far in law school, there have been countless opportunities to pilot strategies, display humility, and redefine commitment. And I say ‘redefine’ because commitment in law school is a whole different ball game.”

### TIFFANY NOBLE

Plano, Texas  
University of Oklahoma –  
B.A., Musical Arts



While working at a private nonprofit college following her college graduation, **Tiffany Noble** encountered students who had fallen victim to organizations, which for a fee, supplied a document purporting to be the equivalent of a high school diploma. “I saw the desperation of these students who had paid

hundreds of dollars for certificates that would not help them find gainful employment or allow them to pursue post-secondary goals,” Noble said. The desire to help people fight injustice became the catalyst to motivate her to return to school and pursue a career in law.

Noble found the OU College of Law to be welcoming. “Staff members seemed truly excited for me to attend, and unendingly dedicated to seeing me not only graduate, but succeed.”

As an avid French horn player, Noble performs in multiple ensembles on local and state levels. She believes this experience, along with her years of work between college and law school, allow her to bring some different perspectives to the subjects she will study as a member of the OU Law Class of 2016.

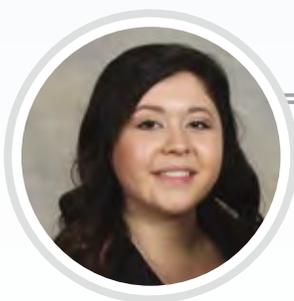


**DAVID POSTIC**  
Oklahoma City  
University of Oklahoma –  
B.B.A., General Management

Life experiences led **David Postic** in a direction he originally thought he did not want to go. “Both of my parents are lawyers, so for a long time I DID NOT want to go to law school. I wanted to forge my own path,” Postic said. “But after debating in high school, working for an

attorney, and figuring out my likes and dislikes – I decided law school was the right fit for me.”

Once he reached that conclusion, his choice of law school was easy. “I chose OU Law because I wanted to stay in Oklahoma, and the University of Oklahoma is my favorite place in the world. The people, the professors, and the opportunities here are things you can’t get anywhere else. It’s just magical.”



**ALIA RAMIREZ**  
Oklahoma City  
University of Oklahoma –  
B.S., Microbiology

By pursuing a dual degree in law and health administration, **Alia Ramirez** aspires to be a positive force in health care. “My roots are in health care and I look forward to growing as a critical-thinking professional in law school,” Ramirez stated. “As health care policy in the U.S.

is rapidly changing, it is an exciting time to be a part of the industry in a legal capacity.”

Attending the OU College of Law was a natural choice for her. “I have attended OU for my undergraduate and graduate education. The people of this institution are like a second family and the campus is like a second home. I am proud to call myself a Sooner!”



**JEFFREY SWIGART**  
Woodward, Oklahoma  
Oklahoma State University –  
B.S., Electrical Engineering

**Jeffrey Swigart** realized something was missing in his professional life. “I determined that working with cutting-edge technology would not match the personal satisfaction I received from working with people,” he explained. “After a transition to ministry, I had the distinct privilege

of pastoring for nearly 10 years the church in my hometown. However, numerous occasions of standing by people in courtrooms, seeking to provide some degree of comfort and support, created in me a desire to offer more than a hand to hold, but a shield to protect.”

When deciding where to attend law school, Swigart weighed his options. “I considered the quality of legal education, the caliber of my future colleagues, and the distinction of alumni and determined OU Law was the right investment for my future,” he said.

With a “multifaceted perspective on life,” Swigart hopes he provides a unique contribution to the Class of 2016. “I’ve sat with the police officer in his squad car, the inmate in his cell, the new dad in the hospital, the new widow at the graveside, the spouse who was cheated on, the parent who was lied to, the child who was abused, and beyond. I trust that in the process, I have been a help to some in their time of gravest need, and I look forward to continuing to help others with a new set of tools provided by OU Law.”

**EMILY TAYLOR**  
Oklahoma City  
University of Oklahoma –  
B.A., Political Science



At age 7, **Emily Taylor** knew what she wanted to be when she grew up – a Radio City Rockette or a Supreme Court justice. After earning a political science degree as an undergraduate, Taylor moved to Orlando, Florida, and worked as a performer for the Walt Disney Company, seemingly on a career path similar to one of her childhood dreams.

“I met people from all over the world and got to make magic for thousands of guests each day,” Taylor said. “I’ll cherish the experience forever.” However, after 6 ½ years of performing in parades and shows, she was ready for a new challenge and she began researching law schools.

Taylor visited OU Law in May 2013 and her decision was made. “I couldn’t imagine going anywhere else. I felt like the administration cared about me as an individual. I met professors who encouraged me about the approachability of the faculty,” she explained. “I also was impressed with the job placement statistics of the Office of Career Development, and the vast amount of resources and opportunities available.”

With a new career focus as a first-year law student, Taylor commented, “I really feel like law is a noble profession with the opportunity to touch lives. I’m excited about the possibilities.” | **SL** |



The Class of 2016