Liz LaPierre (class of 2010) prepared the following summaries of J. Reuben Clark Law School graduates who currently work in a non-traditional legal position, or who have followed a non-traditional career path. These summaries will include background information on the interviewee or lecturer, including their motivation and path to law school, personal history, and career path to the present. These summaries will also include a section about the graduate's current position, including what their daily duties and responsibilities are, what they like and dislike about their jobs, or what skills are required in their position. Each will also include a section with advice to students concerning courses to take, career strategies for pursuing non-traditional work, and other general life advice.

**Lew Cramer – President, Utah World Trade Center**

**Background**

Shortly after graduating from BYU Law School's inaugural class, Lew Cramer took a job doing litigation in Silicon Valley. One day he went to lunch with a partner who was in the middle of a trial. When Lew noticed that his entire lunch consisted of two double vodka martinis, Lew began to question whether litigation was a good choice for him. In fact, another attorney told Lew he was zero for three as an attorney because he didn't smoke, drink or play golf. Despite these instances, Lew continued on at that firm for a year and a half, gaining valuable experience, especially when his required responsibilities included one deposition and one court appearance every day. Ultimately he decided that litigation wasn't how he wanted to spend his life.

After leaving that firm, Lew took a job in Los Angeles doing business-oriented work. He said it was a wonderful experience in part due to the partners. Lew became known as the international guy at the firm entirely by chance, as he was the only one willing to stay late one Friday afternoon and finish up some work licensing individuals in Europe for the brand-new sport of windsurfing. Additionally, when one of the senior partners in his firm became the chairperson for the 1984 Olympics, Lew was put in charge of recruiting foreign language hosts. He had majored in German in college in addition to serving a church mission in Germany.
Eventually Lew made his way to Washington D.C. and participated in the White House Fellows program, working directly with President Reagan’s trade representatives. When the representative for Japan resigned to go teach at Dartmouth, Lew was selected to take his place. His new job was far removed from the law, although his law degree was useful in understanding regulations and politics.

**Job Description**

Eventually Lew made his way back to Utah and helped found the Utah World Trade Center, and currently acts as its President. His current job involves helping make the US, and Utah in particular, more competitive globally. Lew states that over one third of Utah’s economy involves international commerce and the Utah World Trade Center works to make things easier for Utah firms, as well as Utah law students, to be international.

**Advice to Students**

Lew shared a few lessons he has learned as he planned and began his career. The first was not to lock yourself into one particular area of law or business, because you never know where your career might take you. Lew always thought he would be a West coast litigator, but ended up working in East coast international business. Other advice Lew offers law students is to take a variety of classes you might not think you are interested in. Case in point, Lew took tax classes, despite having received an English degree, and loved them, and ended up teaching partnership and real estate tax law at a business school for a time. Also, Lew advises students to forever continue learning, and that ongoing learning is critical. He specifically recommended staying abreast of current issues by reading periodicals such as *The Economist*.

Lew also recommends becoming very good friends with your classmates because you’ll never know if the guy sitting next to you will be the next CEO of an international company. In addition, having a law degree gives you a lot of credibility. Although he did not practice law in Washington D.C., he got a lot of opportunities because he had a law degree. A law degree, even if not utilized, is considered “coin of the realm in D.C.”
Wendy Archibald – Assistant Dean, Internal & Student Relations, J. Reuben Clark Law School

Background

Wendy Archibald not only has a non-traditional legal job, her route to law school itself was non-traditional. Wendy’s current job title is Assistant Dean, Internal and Student Relations at J. Reuben Clark Law School. Her duties include counseling students and addressing any issue they might have that compromises their ability to study. This includes health issues, family issues and learning disabilities, for example.

After completing an undergraduate degree in geography and serving an LDS mission, Wendy worked for a company that took performing companies on tour. After a number of years of working up to the level of Vice President, she left what she said was a wonderful position and applied to and was accepted to law school. This path was partially unexpected to her because
no one else in her family had graduated from college, let alone completed any graduate work. During her time at law school, Wendy often wondered why she was there, although she had always been active and interested in politics and public policy work.

Since she had a successful career before law school, Wendy was 10 years older than the women in her law school class. Despite this, she became great friends with her classmates and many of the faculty. Wendy described law school as very challenging but very academically stimulating and she remembers it fondly. During law school she worked with the Utah Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel doing public policy work. After graduation in 1993, the economy was in a severe recession and more than half of her classmates were unemployed at graduation, including Wendy herself. Anxious and distraught, she applied for job after job only to come in second place for the position each time. Through word of mouth and informal networking, she eventually landed a job with Congressman Bill Orton and worked for him for three years. During that period, she met and married her husband and they had their first daughter. During this time she also became involved in committee planning work with the BYU Law School Alumni Association and women’s conference.

It was suggested to Wendy that she should get a job as a corporate trainer, so she cut back her work week with Congressman Orton and pursued training and certification in the field. Wendy was very successful as a corporate trainer, eventually starting her own company and developing her own training program. She mostly trained salespersons and engineers to give presentations, in addition to some employment law training and international work. In working two days a month, she earned as much as she had earned working for the congressman. Her job provided a lot of flexibility which was especially important for her family. In fact, Wendy said this job was the ideal combination of interesting work, money and flexibility. She says she “never had a better thing going” and that at that point in her career she could “write her own ticket” and the money from that job was “like manna from heaven.”

**Job Description**

After the dot com bust and September 11, 2001, Wendy’s business and the need for her services began to decline. During this time she became much
more involved in the Alumni Board, even serving as the president of the Alumni Association for a number of years. This service made her very visible to the law school administration and the alumni. However, it still came as a surprise to Wendy when she received a call from former Dean Reese Hansen, head of the search committee, encouraging her to apply for the position of Assistant Dean of Internal and Student Relations. Wendy was quite happy with her current job and unwilling to completely uproot her family from their home in Sandy (at this time her daughters were middle school age). Not only that, but this position was full-time. Wendy had consciously chosen not to work full-time due to family priorities and she wasn’t about to start. She said that she would need a strong sign for her to take this job, a “burning bush.” That burning bush came during a church service the night after she was offered the position by Dean Kevin Worthen, when she was singing the words, “Come, come ye saints/No toil nor labor fear/But with joy wend your way.”

Advice to Students

Wendy’s advice to students in their career path is two-fold, try to keep your priorities in the right order and prayerfully make your decisions. Along with that, she says to have the courage to follow the answers you receive, even if that means turning down jobs that logic and common sense would have you take, and taking jobs that you might not otherwise consider. During various periods in her career, Wendy has had jobs land in her lap quite frequently that appeared to be fantastic opportunities, but which just were not right for her and her family. For example, she was offered a job as in-house counsel for Utah Healthcare Counsel to train to be a lobbyist. The work was interesting and the pay phenomenal, but Wendy did not feel right about accepting the position. Wendy also advises students to be nice to everyone (or at least humane) because although she has not engaged in much formal networking, many opportunities have come her way by virtue of people she knows. “Just be your best self,” “be candid and open,” and “work with integrity,” Wendy advises. In interviews, do not overplay or underplay yourself; just have a clear knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses. Despite the tendency of having fantastic jobs landing in her lap, Wendy says that you have to do a lot of legwork, “but ultimately the Lord has a plan for you; you just have to let it unfold.”
Nancy Kennedy Major – Corporate and Foundation Director for United Way of Utah

Background

Nancy Kennedy Major graduated from J. Reuben Clark Law School in 2007. She entered law school thinking she would become an estate planning attorney, as she had long been interested in tax policy, particularly in shaping it to incentivize charitable giving. She envisioned a world where communities became self-sustaining through citizens who gave freely (regardless of their degree of wealth) by developing estate plans with congenial attorneys to provide much-needed social services and lessen the burden and responsibility of the government. Little did Nancy know that the world did not work that way. She was interested in developing a warm and fuzzy estate planning practice but during her first year clerkship with an estate planning firm, she discovered the reality were that estate planning consisted of lots of forms and impersonal client contact. She bemoaned the fact that she was not making a difference in the community.

Her second summer was better Nancy says, working with LDS Philanthropies at BYU. She was much happier to be working with donors, planned giving, and philanthropy. After graduating from law school, Nancy received an offer to work in Washington D.C., but declined the offer and remained in Utah. She took an entry level position at United Way of Salt Lake City after finding the job on the Internet. She said that there is a certain point in pursuing an alternative career where you have to be willing to take a huge risk. Taking that job was a very big risk, Nancy says, because not only was it entry level, but she was making less money than before law school.

Fortunately after working there for six months there was an organizational restructuring and she was promoted to Corporate Relations Director; suddenly she was on a real career path. Her duties expanded, as did her supervisory responsibility, and her pay effectively doubled.

Job Description

In her current position, Nancy spends her time working closely with CEOs and Boards of Directors at companies, securing corporate matches and talking about how they can support the United Way. This part of her job is much like being a salesperson, says Nancy. Other duties include supervising
a staff of seven employees who work closely with companies in implementing corporate giving campaigns, writing grants, and maintaining relationships with foundations who underwrite United Way’s administrative costs. Nancy says that writing grants is like the persuasive writing you might do in law school.

Advice to Students

Nancy advises those pursuing an alternative career to take care and plan for the future. Since alternative jobs (like hers) often do not pay as much as their traditional counterparts, she suggests investing substantially in your 401k. She also advises students to take courses such as Business Associations while in law school. Nancy spoke about finding balance, and how having a law degree and working in alternative careers might make work and family balance more attainable. Nancy’s long term goals are to do some consulting and manage a “smallish estate planning practice with a biggish family.” Above all, Nancy notes that “the real key to having an alternative legal career … is to put yourself in positions where opportunities will probably come up even when you’re not positive that they will.”

Brandon Simmons – Staff Attorney, Utah Crime Victims Legal Clinic

Background

Brandon Simmons entered law school wanting to fight for the underdog. He wanted to help and represent children in abuse and divorce cases. He tried working for a government agency during his first summer, but it was not a good fit. He had come to law school to help those who were most in need, and he found himself trying to a lot of mental gymnastics to justify to himself how the work he was doing was helping people. He told himself that by helping to save the state money, more of the state’s money could be used to help people, but in the end, the link was too distant – he wanted to provide direct services to people.

For his second summer, Brandon worked with the Guardian ad Litem’s office. Brandon really enjoyed that, but one day near the end of his 3L year, a friend of Brandon’s attended a lecture put on by the Women’s Law Forum about a legal clinic that represented crime victims, and his friend told him that she thought he might enjoy that work. Brandon graduated in 2006 and started studying for the bar. He remembered what his friend had told
him and since he did not have a job at the time, called the speaker, sent his resume and shortly thereafter was hired by Utah Crime Victim’s Legal Clinic.

**Job Description**

Victims’ rights are a relatively new thing and are not yet well known. Brandon likes that his job is unconventional and likes explaining it to people and even other lawyers who are not familiar with victims’ rights law or victims’ rights attorneys. Brandon’s clients are those who have been victims of crimes themselves, as in the case of sexual abuse or domestic violence, or those who have been closely affected, like family members of a homicide victim. Victim’s rights in Utah include “the right to be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and sensitivity; the right to a speedy resolution of their case; the right to be informed and assisted; the right to an explanation of the legal proceedings and any plea negotiations; the right to notice of all important criminal justice proceedings; the right to be present in the courtroom for all important hearings; the right to be free from threats and intimidation; the right to privacy; the right to be heard at sentencing, and the right to restitution and reparations for their losses.”

Brandon’s typical day includes a few hearings in the morning, where he argues for victims’ rights. This can include helping victims speak at sentencing hearings, or arguing that there should not be any unnecessary delays in a criminal trial. The rest of the day is spent interviewing clients, drafting motions, and grant reporting, as the legal clinic is funded by federal grants.

**Advice to Students**

Brandon says he really likes working with people, not only his clients, but the prosecutors as well. He says it is important to maintain good working relationships with them. Brandon says that the most frustrating part of his job is having to be the bearer of bad news. He often has to tell people that although something is patently unfair or unjust, that is how the system works and they must work inside the system. Another downside of his job is the pay – although he can comfortably provide for his family, including his wife and three children, it still pays much lower than a traditional law firm, but as Brandon says, “I wouldn’t trade it for anything.”
Trent Pederson – Special Agent with FBI

Background

When Trent was an 11 year old boy scout, he remembers sitting around a campfire listening to his FBI agent scoutmaster telling stories of chasing Russian spies and kidnappers. He also remembers thinking, “People get paid to do that?” During one of his law school summers, Trent worked in the District Attorney’s office in Boise, which he loved. He even received a job offer after graduation but had to turn them down because the salary would not have covered his student loans. At graduation, Trent decided he wanted a prestigious job with a high salary. He took a litigation position, and although he enjoyed the challenge, he did not enjoy sitting in a room of documents doing discovery.

One day out of the blue, he received a call from the FBI inviting him to apply to be a special agent. Trent had served his LDS mission in Italy and spoke fluent Italian and Sicilian. He had an Italian degree in addition to an English degree from BYU. The FBI told him that if you can pass the FBI background check, you can have a job. This was during the John Gotti wiretapping and the FBI was desperate for Sicilian speakers who could pass a background check.

The FBI really likes hiring attorneys because not only are the laws complex, but so are the criminals. You really have to be able to understand how to prove a case and how to be able to prosecute the bad guys and a law degree is a very useful tool in doing that. In the FBI worldwide, there are around 1200 lawyer-agents, and they carry guns, handcuffs, and they chase down the bad guys. These special agents need to be jack-of-all-trades. In addition, there are around 300 attorneys who work in the Washington D.C. Office of General Counsel doing very specialized work in civil litigation, privacy, civil liberties, national security, FISA and 4th Amendment.

Job Description

A typical day for Trent might include any of the following activities: getting an emergency FISA application approved (i.e. an emergency wiretap on a spy or terrorist), getting a search warrant for a child pornographer, writing a national security letter on a terrorist case, dealing with employment law issues, providing training for the local police department, and negotiating a contract on a mutual deal with another law enforcement agency. As much
as half of Trent’s time in Utah is spent wiretapping and searching homes, businesses and computers of terrorists and spies. At any time of day Trent says, you could receive a call that someone has a bomb or hostages or has barricaded themselves in a house somewhere – stuff the public rarely knows or hears about. It is all very exciting, Trent says.

Advice to Students

The pros of Trent’s job include the people he works with. Lawyer-agents are not only very intellectual, but if you are in the FBI, you most likely believe in what America stands for. His co-workers and colleagues love their country and love doing things to protect it, which results in a lot of camaraderie.

Trent says it is not too difficult to balance his work and family lives, as all overseas and other assignments longer than 30 days are usually completely voluntary, although most people are beating down the door for assignments such as these. The pay is also very generous, including a 5% match on retirement contributions in addition to a $40,000-50,000 pension after 20 years of service.

FBI agents receive a lot of training, from firearms, to substantive law, and sometimes even nuclear weapons disarmament training. In his 15 years with the agency, Trent has had five or six different careers as there are so many opportunities for different assignments and advancement. Moreover, Trent has tremendous job satisfaction. During his time practicing litigation, he says he enjoyed the work, did a good job and was very ethical, but ultimately, you cannot choose your clients. Often you reach litigation because neither party to civil litigation has clean hands, and ultimately if you have won a case, your client may still be a “dirt bag.” But working for the FBI, Trent says when someone comes up to you and thanks you for bringing them closure in a case, or catching the bad guys, there is no comparison between the feeling he gets and the feeling of winning a civil judgment. Not to mention, “You’re getting paid for this.” Nothing, not the pay, the benefits, the retirement can make up for the feeling you get when you return a child to their family, Trent explains.

Some of the cons of Trent’s job are that it is potentially dangerous (although only 35 agents have been lost in the line of fire in the 100+ years of the agency’s existence). Trent compares this to the risk of being a litigator. One day while still at his law firm, one of the managing partners pulled out his
.357 piston and showed it to Trent. Trent was taken aback, but the partner explained that in litigation people get mad. Someone has to lose, and sometimes they are mad at you. Trent explained you have about the same chance of getting killed in litigation as you do as an FBI agent. Not only that, but being an FBI agent is a lot different than being a local cop. The FBI has much more training and resources and usually by the time they go storming into a hideout, they have worked up a case so well they know what the bad guy is eating for breakfast.

Another con of government work is the bureaucracy and red tape of a government agency. This is pretty low on the list though, because, after all, most law firms have bureaucracy and red tape too.

Trent’s advice to students includes finding a job that you really love, but one that can also pay the bills. Trent notes that not one of his law school friends is doing what they were doing when they graduated law school. Just get a job, Trent says, get experience and that will help you find more work and help you find what you really want to do. He also advises BYU Law Students to look into becoming agents with the FBI. The FBI hires about 1% of its applicants, but 30-40% of BYU Law student applicants make it, due to their intelligence, character, honesty and lack of past drug use.

Mark Webber – President of First American Title Insurance Agency

Background

Mark Webber did not grow up wanting to go to law school; it is something he sort of fell into on the advice of a professor. After taking many upper-level business courses in college (where he majored in marketing and finance), he was thinking about getting his MBA. A professor said that since he had already taken many of the MBA courses, he should attend law school instead. This sounded eminently reasonable to Mark.

After Mark’s first year of law school, he obtained a clerkship with a law firm in Salt Lake City. His job was to sit in the library and churn out briefs. He really did not like this. Although he did like the royal treatment he received as a summer associate, it was really not his style. He was invited back after his second year of law school as well, and accepted the position again. That summer, he was able to get more client interaction by attending client meetings, in addition to observing other attorneys in court. At this point, he
started enjoying the work a bit more and could even see himself doing this for a living. After his third year, it was time to find a real job, and he says he was fortunate enough to have a job with the law firm.

Mark graduated in 1986, and transferred to the company litigation practice group, where business was booming and money flowed freely. There was a lot of litigation involving local mining companies and Mark says that litigation really brought the Rules of Civil Procedure to life. He found the work very interesting and he found that he really liked what he was doing. He liked the fighting, the arguing, the debates and discussions, and also found that he was pretty good at it. He also worked his tail off, frequently pulling all-nighters and weekends. The goal was to become a partner and he accomplished it, corner office and all. His office had really nice views, Mark says, which was good because he spent a lot of time there. Mark also really enjoyed the associations he had with the other attorneys at the firm and liked conversing with genuinely good, smart people. He also appreciated being able to bounce ideas off the other attorneys at the drop of a hat.

After nine years with the law firm, Mark was at a conference in Washington D.C., where he met a man who knew a man who wanted to expand his California title insurance company into Utah. Mark wrestled with the idea of leaving his law firm job and going into business with this man. He says his mother thought he was nuts for even thinking about leaving a job that he had worked so hard for and been so successful at. He resigned from his practice and opened a title insurance company. Mark says that it completely changed the course of his life, but ended up being a great thing and he has been very fortunate that the business has gone well. Mark says that he could have also practiced law and been very happy and fulfilled, but was glad to have made the decision to leave because he had always wanted to work in business and have a business of his own.

Despite this, Mark is very glad to have attended law school because, “you leave with a skill you can use for the rest of your life,” and you can practice wherever you land. Moreover, Mark uses the skills he learned in law school and the practice of law every day for the different things he does in his business. One thing Mark particularly appreciates is the requirement he had as an attorney to keep track of his time. Although it was a challenge for Mark, it was also good discipline and he says it teaches you not to waste time, especially when you have to work ten hours to be able to bill seven.
Job Description

In Mark’s current job as President of First American Title Insurance Agency, he wears many hats. He is primarily involved in managing people (he supervises anywhere between 500 and 1000 employees). Mark deals with a lot of Human Resources issues and employee relations. He must motivate, recruit and retain good people, try to improve the employee pool, and have the best employees in the business. Underlying these tasks though are the obligations to make money and build market share, and generally bring value to the company.

His company employs around six attorneys. Attorneys work in the claims department, which also oversees litigation done by outside firms; they work in Human Resources; they work in the 1031 exchange department (this is a method of trading commercial property for tax deferral purposes), and they sometimes work as escrow officers (although this isn’t actually the practice of law).

Advice to Students

The work done in a title insurance company is very closely tied to real property law, so he paying attention in that class. He loved his property class, particularly because of its practical applications. Mark says that it will affect anyone who buys a house. Mark also deals with contracts a lot as well as employee relations, so recommends taking contracts and employment law courses.

Mark remarked that as a newcomer in the title industry, his law degree gave him instant credibility, since he knew what the documents meant (including warranty deed, trust deed, how to foreclose on a trust deed). He says it usually takes regular business professionals years to get that same credibility. Mark says that law school teaches you how to think, and how to recognize issues, or even to recognize that there is an issue that you do not recognize and need to get help with.
Helen Anderson, like many others, excelled in law school and really enjoyed practicing law. Helen majored in theater as an undergraduate, but due to a head injury sustained by her husband, they determined that she was the one best able to provide for their family. That led Helen to law school, where she graduated in 1996. After graduation, Helen went to work for a local Provo law firm. Helen was a generalist and her practice included a wide variety of civil litigation, including property, foreclosures, contracts and torts.

This law firm did not have a minimum billable hour requirement like most law firms. The compensation structure was more like a commission plan. Helen received a percentage of all the revenue she brought in. This flexibility accommodated her work and her family, including the child she had during law school, and the three she had afterward. While enjoying this flexibility, Helen was not making enough money to support her family. She started looking into marketing and began reading books on the subject in an effort to become more marketable and develop a niche practice area. Helen said she quickly became more interested in marketing than practicing law. She made the decision to leave her law practice for a few years and go work in the construction industry – one of the industries she planned to specialize in. She hoped to develop contacts in the industry and bring those contacts back to her practice. Helen found a job doing community relations for Utah Homebuilders Association, where her duties included following agendas of city council meetings for the cities in the county and making note when issues appeared on the agenda that affected her client. She then would inform and mobilize members when they needed to oppose a proposed measure. She really enjoyed her work, but noticed that the industry was starting to decline, so started looking for another job.

Helen jumped at the chance to work for Provo City and applied for the job she now holds, although she was not entirely qualified. She has community relations experience, but did not have public relations experience, which was the other part of the job. She says the application process was intense, and at one point she was put into a room and told to write a mock press release and hold a mock news conference. Luckily there was a computer.
in the room, and Helen was able to Google, “How to write a press release,” and was able to complete the application. In the end, she withdrew her application because she felt she was unqualified for the position, but the city contacted her anyway because they still hadn’t found someone who was more qualified. In her interviews, she told them she was willing to learn the public relations side of the job and eventually was offered the position.

**Job Description**

As Community Relations and Public Information Officer, Helen has a variety of responsibilities, including community relations, media relations, event planning and speech writing. A big part of her job is writing press releases and getting them to reporters hoping they will do something with them. Helen says she looks for the good that people do and then tells their stories. She says she knows she is on the right career path because some of the stories she works on give her the chills! Her community relations responsibilities include participating with outside organizations on behalf of the mayor’s office, for example the Provo Freedom Festival and the Provo Chamber of Commerce. She also helps oversee the programming on the local government access channel, including broadcasting the city council meetings.

**Advice to Students**

Helen loved law school and did really well, in part because she was able to learn project management. She says the ability to identify a problem, implement a strategy and carry out the solution served her well in law school and has been an important skill in each job she’s held. She also says that even though she doesn’t practice law, she uses the substantive knowledge she gained in law school and law practice almost every day in her current job. Helen wants each student to know that just because you went to law school doesn’t mean you have to practice law and you can enjoy either one.