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Two-Year Law Degree Difference: $100,000

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David Treadway figures taking two years to complete law school, instead of the usual three, is worth nearly $100,000.

"I saved a lot," Treadway said. "I'll be earning income a year earlier plus I won't have a year's worth of living expenses while not working full-time. If your living expenses are $20,000 and the average first-year salary is $60,000-$80,000, give or take, you are right around $100,000."

It's one of the reasons Treadway selected the University of Dayton School of Law's accelerated option in the Lawyer as Problem Solver program. He will be among the first 33 graduates of UD's two-year option.

In all, 127 students will graduate from the UD School of Law at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 10, at University of Dayton Arena.

The time it took to reach graduation is about the only difference between the two-year and the traditional three-year students. The course requirements are the same for all.

"We haven't seen any real differences in academic performance. We have great students in both groups," said Lori Shaw, dean of students. "It's a question of preference and priorities.

Some students truly savor the traditional law school experience with its time for reflection, clerkships and lots of extracurricular activities. Others, particularly those with families or for whom law is a second career, cannot wait to become part of the justice system."

Casie Hollis chose to follow the traditional route. She served as editor-in-chief of the Dayton Law Review and clerked with Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP. Hollis will work for the firm after she takes the bar exam.

"Choosing UD was the best option for my family and me; the six-semester option allowed me to get the most of my work experience, education and extracurricular activities," Hollis said. "I also think having two summers to work different jobs was, for someone like me who did not know what type of law she wanted to practice, a great opportunity to try on different legal hats."

But others who opted for a faster pace indicated they didn't feel they missed a "typical law student" experience by shortening their stay by a year.

"You can have the time for whatever you want," said Brandy Tolley, president of the law school's St. Thomas More Society and clerk of the UD chapter of an international legal fraternity, Phi Delta Phi. "You just have to make the time."

Melinda Warthman found time to be on the Dayton Law Review and serve as the historian for the international legal fraternity as well as president of the Parents and Family Association, which helps students achieve balance between personal and professional life.

Melissa Ford is graduating from the two-year law program with a job in the Montgomery County (Ohio) Prosecutor's Office. Handling the program's pace was a feather in her cap during the job interview process, she said.

"I think it surprised them, but impressed them," Ford said about potential employers. "It showed them how hard-working you have to be to get through a program like this."

The two-year graduates aren't the only firsts at this year's spring commencement.

Aziz Ahmad is the first student to graduate from the UD School of Law with a Master of Laws (LL.M.) degree in intellectual property law.

Ahmad chose this path because of an accident that paralyzed his sister. He hopes to become a patent lawyer to help medical researchers.

The Master of Law (LL.M.) degree is an advanced law degree for anyone who already has received a law degree anywhere in the world.
the world. UD officials believe their program is the 19th U.S. law school, and one of two in Ohio, to offer an LL.M. degree in intellectual property.

UD developed Lawyer as Problem Solver three years ago because of student and employer concerns that students learned more about theory than the practical skills needed to deal with real clients. The program, which has a two-year option for flexibility, emphasizes service and applying legal education to solve problems for clients, communities and the world.

The program has attracted the attention of national media and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

UD School of Law Dean Lisa Kloppenberg is part of the Carnegie Foundation's current examination of how American law schools educate their students. She is on a panel that includes representatives from 10 law schools, including Harvard University and New York University.

For more information, contact Shawn Robinson, associate director of media relations, at 937-229-3391 or srobinson@udayton.edu.