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## Changemakers: Master Of Studies In Law: 'Something New And Different...': Monique Kuester

Roger Williams University School of Law

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## CHANGEMAKERS MASTER OF STUDIES IN LAW

# 'Something New and Different ...'



Monique Kuester

Monique Kuester

### [Master of Studies in Law](#)

When lifelong Iowan Monique Kuester suddenly found herself starting over in New England – her husband had relocated the family to Rhode Island for his work – she decided it was time to “freshen up” her own rather impressive résumé.

And for her, RWU Law’s Master of Studies in Law seemed like the perfect vehicle with which to achieve that goal.

“My hope was to bolster what I could bring to the table for employers,” she explains. “I felt that my professional background was very strong on its own, but also I worried that it might seem a little stale. I wanted something new and different to offer.”

Law seemed like a good path forward. Whether working with the Iowa Department of Labor or the Office of the Governor, Kuester has always been what she terms “legal adjacent.”

“I worked mainly in insurance and compliance; and with laws and regulations as they related to insurance,” she says. “With the Department of Labor, for example, I worked with unemployment appeals, representing the employer side. It involved a lot of work with attorneys; I even helped draft the decisions.”

Sharpening, deepening and updating her legal knowledge base through the MSL was a logical next step.

“Now not only am I ‘legal adjacent,’ but I also have something to back it up with,” she says. “Thanks to the MSL program, I’ve added something stronger to what I already knew from being around laws and regulations for so many years.”

### **Feeling at Home**

From the moment Kuester first arrived at RWU Law’s seaside campus one late spring day and sat in on a Torts class, she knew she’d found a home.

“I thought, ‘This is really good!’” she laughs. “I guess I’d always had the law school bug, but I had never pursued it. I took another path – it just never happened for me. So I looked into the MSL program a bit further, and thought – well, my husband’s family is chock-a-block with attorneys, my brother-in-law is a judge in Iowa. They all said, ‘Why don’t you pursue it? We’ll write you a letter of recommendation!’ And in my prior job with the Department of Labor, I had attorneys reporting to me, and one of them -- whom I’ve remained friends with -- told me, ‘You were a great boss. I’ll write you a letter!’”

The rest, as they say, is history.

“Now I’m immersed in employment and labor and insurance law, taught by professors with experience in those areas,” she says. “And I’m keeping my textbooks, by the way! They’ll be helpful once I’m back in the field!”

As she completes her MSL studies, Kuester is hard at work on a final paper.

“It looks at the implications of recreational marijuana use in the workplace,” she says. “In fact, I’ve even used my research as a catalyst for my job interviews, to generate discussion. A lot of employers have not addressed that issue in their handbooks. What happens when their employees are using on weekends and then they come in and there’s a random drug test?”

In the meantime, her affection for Roger Williams hasn't wavered.

“I fell in love, not only with the program, but with the people and the University as a whole,” Kuester says. “Everywhere I go I talk about it. I just can’t imagine another institution where people care so much about their students; especially at *this* level – I mean, it’s a *law* school! Not the sort of place where you’d think you could get invited to the Dean’s home for a cookout, and have them know you by name when you arrive. Or when you’re having health issues, and

another professor stops in to check on you and make sure you're doing okay. It's just an amazing institution. I'm almost sad to be finishing the program!"

The most public sign of her satisfaction is right out in plain sight.

"My husband and I have a joke – neither of us like bumper stickers on our cars," Kuester says. "Well, one day I told him, 'Okay, I've made up my mind. I think RWU Law is the first time I'm going to put a sticker on my car!' That just stopped him cold. He looked at me and said, 'Wow, this is major.'"