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Law School News: Elisabeth D'Amelio Chosen as Class of 2024 Graduate Student Commencement Speaker

In her remarks the M.A. in Cybersecurity and Juris Doctor dual degree recipient will urge her fellow graduates to be open to what comes next in their journeys.

May 14, 2024

By Jordan J. Phelan '19



BRISTOL, R.I. – Selected as the Graduate Student Commencement Speaker for the Class of 2024, Elisabeth D'Amelio, of Lincoln, R.I., said she knows how easy it is to compare yourself to other people. That's why the dual Juris Doctor and M.A. in Cybersecurity candidate will encourage her fellow graduates to follow their own paths as part of her speech at the May 17 ceremony.

D'Amelio, who grew up in Rhode Island, graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and English. She chose to attend Roger Williams University because of the institution's esteemed law program, coupled with its unwavering commitment to delivering personalized guidance and instruction to every student, she said.

“Being the only law school in the state, RWU has a wide range of externship programs and deep connections with local law firms, courts, and universities. If you're looking for an experience that allows you to do as much as possible in as short a time as possible, RWU is a really phenomenal school for that,” she said.

D'Amelio shared that her journey at RWU has been deeply enriched by experiential learning opportunities – from her internships at Melick & Porter LLP, where she honed her legal research skills and drafted motions for both federal and state courts, to her position as a clinical extern at the Rhode Island School of Design's General Counsel Office, delving into intricate matters like artificial intelligence and student visas. Additionally, her recent position as a judicial extern for Rhode Island Chief Judge John J. McConnell Jr. provided her with hands-on experience in drafting court orders, attending proceedings, and participating in alternative sentencing discussions.

At RWU, D'Amelio served as a Torts teaching assistant as well as an oral advocate in both the Admiralty Moot Court and Cyber Crimes Moot Court. She was also part of the School of Law Honors Program.

After graduation, D'Amelio said she plans to move to Baltimore and seek admission to the Maryland bar, wanting to stay in the legal field and incorporating her Cybersecurity expertise in some way.

In the following Q&A, D'Amelio shares her thoughts on her role as this year's Graduate Student Commencement Speaker and her time at RWU.

Q: How does it feel to be chosen as the Graduate Student Commencement Speaker?

D'Amelio: It feels great! Being an effective speaker and communicator is something I have always worked hard at, so having the opportunity to do this is really exciting. I think it will be fun. Something I believe in is to apply for everything. Let someone else tell you that you can't have it but never yourself.

Q: What inspired you to apply for the role?

D'Amelio: When I graduated undergrad, I did so by the skin of my teeth, and I didn't even get my degree that day. So it was that experience of watching everybody who knew what they wanted to do with their lives and knowing that I wasn't that kid. Graduation speeches don't tend to recognize that there are a lot of people in the audience who don't know what comes next, so with my speech I want to say that it's OK to be that kid. It's mostly writing how I would want to be talked to and what I would want to hear. Everyone's on their own journey.

Q: What was your creative process for writing your speech?

D'Amelio: I'm a runner, and I tend to write things while I'm running. You will see that influence in the speech because it's kind of about motion and the roadway illusion, which is a phenomenon that psychologists have identified that if you're driving on a highway, you always think the lane

next to you is moving faster. I use that as a way to say that there are going to be times in your life where it's tempting to compare your progress to the person next to you, but it's important to relax, stay in your own lane, and follow your own path. You'll get there.

Q: How has RWU contributed to your growth as a person and professional?

D'Amelio: It's given me more space to explore what I am passionate about and determine what my principles are. It's very easy to just move through the world and absorb other people's perspectives, but the entirety of law school is testing your perspective, testing rules, and testing how you feel about it all, so you come out of it with a more certain view of who you are, where you're willing to bend, and where you aren't. Cybersecurity is kind of the same because they tend to be more analytical and there's no bend there. For me, it's very interesting to discuss different perspectives and see those different personality types.

Q: How would you describe your RWU experience?

D'Amelio: Really positive. RWU was really welcoming to me, and I found a good group of people who were enthusiastic about what they were learning and doing. You can tell when you're talking with them that they are doing something that they believe in, and I think that's great. I don't know if it's the culture of graduate programs generally, or Roger in particular, but it's been a privilege to be a part of that at RWU.