

It's Baylor University's New Student Orientation Day, only this time, I am on the other side of the presentation. I stand with my boss, Dominique Lange, in front of a room of parents and freshmen ready to talk about Baylor's Pre-Law Program. It is such a fulfilling experience to guide new students down the path I have spent countless hours cultivating. We give the basic rundown: the first-year courses, the prep resources available, and our advising services. Everyone begins filing out after the presentation—everyone except one gentleman. He approaches us with a wide smile, telling us (and yes, this is a direct quote) that he “loved our *little* presentation, but had just a few notes on things to improve...”

I wish I were surprised at this moment. Unfortunately, at this point I am all too familiar with how easily my thoughts are dismissed. I consider for a moment if his dismissal is simply because I am young. But that still does not account for my boss, Dominique Lange, who has just explained that she served for years on a law school admissions board. To me, she is the epitome of who to trust for law school advice. But not to him. It's not about the age of the person telling the man the information. It's about the gender.

The legal profession can be especially hard for women to break into, what with the amount of adversity to overcome perceived intelligence gaps, emotional volatility, and other outdated stereotypes. Every woman I know pursuing law has a story like mine. Talked over in academic discussions. Asked for coffee rather than advice. Assumed to be assistants, not attorneys. The problem is exacerbated when, in cases like what I described, women don't push back against these microaggressions in fear of being reputed as "overdramatic" and “impossible

to work with”. But it is impossible to change the status quo without confronting the everyday inequalities within our communities.

This past year, I worked to charter a new organization at Baylor University: Women’s Pre-Law Association, or WPLA. WPLA serves as a space designated for women interested in pursuing law to come together and lift each other up. Through this organization, advocating for women’s rights has taken shape in my life by ensuring that women on campus feel seen and respected as equally viable candidates for law school. Alongside three other women, we explained the need for WPLA to the school, gathered like-minded undergraduates interested in what we had to offer, chartered over 30 members, and finally became recognized as an official Baylor organization. This year, we have organized guests (ranging from current female law students to practicing attorneys) to come and speak to club members about how the profession looks different for them and advice to overcome these barriers. I was even able to include my boss, Dominique Lange, by having her sign on as WPLA’s faculty advisor, which guarantees our organization has access to the wealth of Pre-Law resources we offer. Nothing is more rewarding than watching freshmen come in and, often for the first time, get to hear from people in the legal profession who look like them.

In addition to speakers, we organized events for members to gather to study for the LSAT, workshop their resumes, and commit time to their professional development. Too often, women are dismissed as intellectually inferior or simply not credible. My organization seeks both to debunk these stereotypical beliefs and provide practical support to ensure that our members make themselves strong applicants for law school. Through the validation of our shared

experiences, advice for overcoming obstacles, and support of each other's education, I feel confident in saying that my organization has inspired women to pursue law, rather than making them feel inadequate.

To serve our community, WPLA has reached out to several women's shelters in the Central Texas area to provide necessities (e.g., feminine hygiene products, canned food, clothing, etc.) and support to the families—in particular the women—impacted by domestic violence. We intend to further develop our assistance in Waco by supporting the Family Abuse Center which allows students to volunteer to cook, clean, and decorate the spaces inhabited by survivors. The barriers to legal help are high for those experiencing domestic violence from both the financial and social standpoint. This ties back to our pre-law focus, as these shelters provide valuable connections for our members who want experience with legal clinics that focus on pro bono domestic issues, which work in tandem with the shelters. Making a positive, lasting impact in my community has always been a goal of mine, so the more WPLA takes hold as an organization, my confidence in fulfilling this goal grows.

My personal advocacy will continue by using my bachelor's degree in Political Science (and later down the line, my Juris Doctor) to operate within the legal system as a person deeply familiar with and intent on campaigning for women's rights. Expanding access and education to legal resources is one of the most viable ways for women to advocate for themselves. Ideally, I can incorporate pro bono work into my studies and internships within law school, and then position my career to attack systemic problems head-on through policy reform. I will start this as early as next year, when I intern in Washington D.C. for my Spring 2027 semester. Working on

Capitol Hill would allow me to participate in shaping policies affecting women's access to justice, healthcare, and opportunity. These experiences will equip me with the relationships and perspective necessary to become an effective advocate.

I have been fortunate to have such strong women in my life. My boss is my biggest cheerleader during my law school application journey. Her leadership of the Pre-Law Program inspires me to be more assured in my capabilities. My friends pick me up when work and school are overwhelming. And, of course, my mom has been there for me every step of the way, always reminding me to be proud of who I am. Their influences are deeply felt and it is my hope that one day, I can give back to them through my advocacy, the way every good lawyer ought to do.

As I prepare for the next step in my legal journey, I will take everything—the belittling comments, assumptions, and encouragement alike—and use them as motivation to get the most out of my education and career. I know disparaging comments are inevitable no matter the workplace. My experiences have taught me that true change begins the moment women refuse to let others limit the value of their voice. Through law, advocacy, and the community I continue to build, I will ensure our future attorneys are heard long before anyone has the chance to call their work “little”.