

A room with a view

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Seated comfortably in a meeting room in the Purdy's Wharf offices of law firm Cox & Palmer overlooking the spectacular Halifax waterfront, Caitlin Regan-Cottreau ('10) says without any hesitation that practicing law was all she ever wanted to do. A political science major and two-term member of the Acadia Students' Union, Cait says that her undergraduate program and campus experience took her well beyond law school. ““By the time I got to law school at Dalhousie, I was well-prepared to be a professional.”

Getting the call

Cait admits that when she finished high school in Bedford, NS, Acadia was not her first choice and she almost didn't see it through. “I had decided to attend another university in the area, but the president of Acadia at the time called me to say how much they wanted me. That meant a lot and proved that Acadia was different. I didn't have a great first year – I was more homesick than I thought and I spent every weekend away from campus – so I started my second year of university in Halifax. But one weekend I traveled to Acadia to watch a football game with friends I had left behind, and I just knew when we drove onto campus by Raymond Field that I was home. I immediately transferred to Acadia and never looked back.”

Initially an English major, Cait switched to political science and in her senior year joined the Acadia Students' Union as vice-president student affairs, staying one more year to write her thesis and serve as executive vice-president. "Student government taught me a great deal about what it means to have responsibilities. I was meeting with Town of Wolfville staff and politicians and advocating for students, and I think that experience really helped me form an opinion about why I'm passionate about the law as well as to understand the business side of our profession." Cait's impact on Acadia was substantial and she was recognized for her work with an Excellence in Student Government Award and a Golden 'A'. She graduated as a University Scholar and in July, 2011 she and husband Jon Cottreau ('12) were married in the University Chapel.

Learning through experience

In 2015 Cait was called to the bar and joined Cox & Palmer as an associate after working at the firm as a summer student in 2013 and an articled clerk from 2014-2015. She practices mainly commercial litigation and construction and is a part-time Crown attorney. Her interest in both prosecution and defense comes from her time as a law student when she spent a semester working in the Halifax Legal Aid office. "To be honest, my goal at the outset was to become a Crown prosecutor. I liked the idea of rules and enforcing them. At Legal Aid I found lawyers who are very dedicated and learned that our system only works if we have good people on both sides putting their best cases forward. For me, Legal Aid was the best possible experience because I saw what good lawyers can do for their clients and what an important role lawyers play in their community.

"My immediate goal is to be excellent at what I do. I want to find innovative ways to practice law and to make a difference in my field. In law school we learn how to think about the law, but there is another side to being a lawyer and running a practice. I'm very interested in understanding how business and law intersect, broader issues of governance, and how I can make a direct impact." Cait lends her interest and expertise in governance to a number of volunteer boards and organizations, including the Nova Scotia Gambia Association

Advice to students

Cait's advice to students choosing universities is to look closely at which ones offer you a place where you can be yourself. She says that Acadia has a place for everyone and if there isn't an existing club or organization you can create one. She also says that it's a place where the support network is everywhere. "Whether it's your professor, members of campus security, or the person in meal hall making your lunch, people care. Whenever you need someone, they're there for you. Some of my strongest memories from Acadia are the times we spent just hanging out with our professors on campus or at their homes or during Welcome Week getting to know each other and new students. These are the experiences I remember like they happened yesterday."

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