



Episode 89: The Leap from Undergrad to Law School (with Keri Clapp)

Lee Burgess:

Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about the transition from undergrad to law school, which it turns out is a big one. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess. That's me. We're here to de-mystify the law school and our lead legal career experience so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the Law School Toolbox, the Bar Exam Toolbox and the Catapult Conference. Alison also runs the Girl's Guide to Law School. If you enjoy this show, please leave a review on iTunes. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the contact forum on lawschooltoolbox.com and we'd love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Before we get started, I want to take a minute and share some exciting news. We are thrilled to announce the Start Law School Right contest. The contest launching in April 2017 will offer entrance the chance to land a Start Law School Right Silver Course Package valued at \$485. To learn more about how to enter and official contest rules, please visit our Facebook page, [/lawschooltoolbox](#) or our course page at lawschooltoolbox.com/courses/join. If you missed the contest, we hope you will check out our Start Law School Right course to see if it will be a good fit for you.

Welcome back. Today, we're talking about making the transition from undergrad to law school. If you are a prospective law student, this episode is for you. For everyone else, it is important to recognize how law school is different so you can adjust your habits accordingly.

Today's special guest is Keri Clapp, one of our [law school](#) and [bar exam tutors](#) at the [Law School Toolbox](#). Keri also currently teaches Business Law at Eastern University in Pennsylvania and law school classes at Widener University Delaware Law School. Keri, thanks for joining us.

Keri Clapp:

Hi, Lee.

Lee Burgess:

What I think makes your perspective on this topic so unique and why I wanted to bring you on is because you work with both of these populations simultaneously, undergrads and law students. Before we dive too deeply into this topic, why don't you just share a bit with our listeners how you ended up teaching both of these student populations?

Keri Clapp: I was one of the students that actually loved law school. Some of us don't but I was always interested in legal education. After I'd spent some time in private and government practice, I started exploring where I could teach and use those skills. The first course that I took on as an instructor was teaching an academic support course, which was a course in law school designed to help show up the skills of some of the students who had done okay for a semester but not great. Shortly after that, I took on an undergraduate class. There, I had two populations. One slightly before the other and it really showed me what they had in common and what the challenges were in moving from one to the other.

Lee Burgess: What do you think are the main differences between undergraduate classes and law school classes? Probably the most obvious one is just the format, the Socratic method versus, I guess, what would you call the undergrad method? Just a lecture-based teaching style?

Keri Clapp: I think at the upper level, a lot of students have experience with seminars where there is a lot of interaction with their professor. In general, I think the goal in an undergraduate class is usually pretty specific. They want you to master a topic or a subject area or an industry and be able to discuss it intelligent way and see what the positives are and what the challenges are. I teach mostly business students. The class that I teach tends to be a survey of the legal environment of business. In contrast, whatever subject you're asked to learn in law school, you're also expected to learn like a lawyer and learn how to think about the subject like a lawyer. That's different for a lot of people.

Lee Burgess: I think every new law student hears that term: "You need to think like a lawyer," and nobody's really sure what it means.

Keri Clapp: Yeah. I think it's interesting. When I look at undergraduate textbooks and when I choose the textbooks that I use for my classes, there are a lot of options out there that are very user-friendly in undergrad courses. They have definitions. They have objectives. They have review questions. They're very visual. They're nice to look at, nice to flip through. They're a combination of what old college textbooks used to be and picture books in ways to really reach a wide variety of learners. In contrast, the typical case book that you get in law school looks pretty much the same as it did 50 years ago. It's a big, thick book. Its primary goal is to confuse you at first.

Lee Burgess: With tiny type and very thin pages.

Keri Clapp: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: So you feel you are the slowest reader in the entire world because it takes so long to get through page after page.

Keri Clapp: I distinctly remember getting an assignment to read 30 pages in my first week of law school and thinking, "This is great. It's a very manageable amount. I'm a

good reader. I'm a fast reader. I'll get this." I struggled for several hours to understand what those 30 pages were talking about. That's the point. I wasn't failing to do what I was supposed to do. Struggling with the material and not understanding it was exactly what I was supposed to be doing but I didn't realize that.

Lee Burgess: I think we often say the rule of thumb is about 10 pages an hour. I think that's a sobering fact for a lot of 1L's to realize that that 30-page reading because that can take multiple hours. I took three hours depending on how dense the material is.

Keri Clapp: Yeah. Sometimes, I think both in class and in textbooks, the purpose is to get you confused so that you see whatever topic or issue you're discussing or learning about from so many different sides that you start to feel you're in the weeds and you can't figure it out. Then you gradually start pulling the threads and putting that together. I've mixed my metaphors here, I'm sure.

Lee Burgess: That's okay. I think we follow. I had a professor who wrote our criminal law textbook. He didn't produce a syllabus for the class. It's our first day of 1L year and somebody raises their hand and says, "Well, what's the reading assignment?" He goes, "Well, I think the editor of your case book really has a good plan of how this stuff should be taught. Read 40 something pages a week." We were just like, "Okay. That's it? We just read?" It's the only case book in my entirety of law school where I read the entire case book. We knew we had to read every single page but it was fascinating because usually, you get this complicated syllabus. You're reading a case here and a case there. Most professors don't have time to go through an entire case book. He built this case book for his class. He's like, "Just read the case book. We'll talk about it as it comes through."

Keri Clapp: You got your money for it out of that case book.

Lee Burgess: I did. I did. I can see it. It's sitting on my bookshelf. I've kept it even though it's terribly outdated just because I feel so much pride that I read the whole thing. Start to finish, highlighted, notes in the margins. We talked a bit about the reading. Do you think these assignments are as we said challenging and dense? Just outside of the difference in the case books, which I think is a fabulous distinction, the law professors are really tasked with giving you challenging assignments. If you don't think what you're doing is hard, then you may not be doing it correctly. Don't you think?

Keri Clapp: I do. I do. I've seen a lot of students that did really well with a certain skillset in college. Many of those skills are transferable to law school, but sometimes, they have to look at those skills in a new way and get the new skills that they need. For instance, some really bright students that haven't dealt with a lot of ambiguity. They may be engineering majors or math majors. It takes them a while to understand that no matter how much they work on something by

themselves, it may not click until they sit through that class, hear the professor question their classmates, challenge what their classmates say and take them through a series of cases that at the end, they understand all the issues that are involved. But they can't do it on their own. They don't sit in class and think, "I prepared, I'm in great shape." They sit in class and think, "I prepared. Why am I still confused?" When that's exactly what they're supposed to be feeling.

Lee Burgess: Please don't call on me. Right. I think that's a really good point. When I think about the difference between even my memory of my undergrad exams versus my law school exams, my undergrad classes were so much more about understanding the material. You might get a question that asks you what was Marbury v. Madison? What did it lay out as far as the rules or the approach for judicial review? But in law school, you may see that on the question but you're likely not going to. You're likely going to just see a fact pattern and maybe you have to mention Marbury v. Madison because it sets the precedent for judicial review. It's a very different format because it's all about that analysis. You have to memorize stuff, too. It's about thinking like a lawyer, which I think the analysis is really the biggest piece of that thinking like a lawyer phrase for new law students.

Keri Clapp: Yes. I agree. I think that a key, too, is you're asked to learn say 10 topics in an undergrad class. If you learn and understand those 10 topics, you may be able to do very well on an assessment. In law school, you have to learn and understand and know those 10 topics but then you have to be able to be flexible with them. Somebody throws you a situation that doesn't really fit cleanly into any category and you have to take those things that you learned and use them like tools to make an argument for how a problem could be solved. From the very beginning of really good law school classes, they're trying to say, "You're going to deal with some hard problems as a lawyer. Our job is to help you figure out how to take all this stuff you're learning and use it as a tool to solve a problem for a real person."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. That's a really good point. You were mentioning, especially math majors and sometimes, science majors, engineering who are really used to having one right answer. I had friends in law school, though, who, especially were science majors who were quite good at law school because they were used to memorizing a ton of information. I remember one of my friends had been pre-med for a while. I was complaining about the volume of memorizing. She goes, "Well, you never took O Chem."

Keri Clapp: True.

Lee Burgess: I'm like, "Fair point." She's like, "I had to learn the best way to do a lot of rote memorization." I think a lot of us liberal arts majors, I was a psychology and media studies major, skipped that part of a lot of our classes.

Keri Clapp: And some of us are not good at memorizing things. We have to really struggle to memorize.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Keri Clapp: Interestingly though, I think some of the science majors do better with the legal writing piece than some of the students that have done more thesis writing in college. I get a lot of students in the first semester of law school that are very good writers if you asked them to write an opinion piece on something. But they don't write in the organizational format that law school and lawyers expect them to write in. Students that either have done the less writing, so they're grateful when we give them a rubric and say, "Here. Follow this formula," or students that come from a more science background that are used to following a scientific method—they adopt the legal rubric of CREAC or IRAC very quickly. They use it and they're successful.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Keri Clapp: And some of my best writers have struggled against, "Well, I don't want to write that way. I like to write this way and this has been successful, and this sounds better." Well, it may sound better in one context but it's not what you're expected to do at a time pressure exam.

Lee Burgess: True. Yeah. English majors and history majors, I have found, sometimes philosophy, too struggle with that because so much of their undergraduate experience was about crafting language, which there's a time and a place for crafting legal language but it's usually not on a timed exam.

Keri Clapp: Yeah. The good news is, I think once they relax into the structure that's expected of them, they're very successful with their writing because they know how to write to persuade or write to convince, so their skills are better. They just have to fit them into a new box.

Lee Burgess: I think that's true. I'd like to think about it as writing in this IRAC format or the CREAC format, writing with using all of these terms of art that you learn in law school. It's almost like learning how to write in the bit of a foreign language. It's going to feel awkward to you when you do it. Any time you study a foreign language—I'll be honest. my foreign language skills are not wonderful—I didn't exactly sound like myself when I would study Spanish and I would talk in Spanish because it was very calculated for a while. Until you get comfortable with it and your personality and your comfort level will make that language sound like your own. I think with legal writing, it's the same thing.

You have to really abandon some of these signature things about your writing and how you like things to sound until you understand the basics of the language necessary and then it will start to sound like you. I remember going back and reading some of my 1L papers that got very good marks but didn't

sound like me at all. My more scholarly type papers that I was writing for my seminars at the end, they definitely did. Then, I had absorbed that legal terminology and that legal formats into my own being and then it started to sound like me. Now, I'm sure it's completely indistinguishable.

Keri Clapp: Well, because now you sound like a lawyer.

Lee Burgess: Right. Thank goodness after all these years.

Keri Clapp: Even if you don't want to but you do. Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Right. Just ask everyone in our world who has to hear somebody who tries to tell us, "Please don't talk to me like you're in your lawyer voice," I think is the request.

Keri Clapp: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: I guess the biggest challenge I would give to an undergrad as they start law school is to come into it with an open mind. That you're going to have to be willing to abandon some of these—I wouldn't necessarily say abandon your writing skills, but abandon some of the nuances that you may have come to appreciate and enjoy to craft your writing, and take a step back until you learn legal writing and then you can insert that stuff back in.

Keri Clapp: Yeah. I think you don't abandon your skills but you might have to set aside your style.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, style.

Keri Clapp: Legal writing is almost technical writing at the beginning. Your reader is looking for very specific things in very specific places. The easier you make it for your reader to find that, the more successful your feedback is.

Lee Burgess: Right. You've taught legal writing. I remember from my legal writing 1L class, When I tried to get creative with the organization, thinking I had the most amazing way to approach a problem, my grades, well, they were "creative." They had a lot of creativity to them but they weren't what I wanted them to be, I guess. When I approached my second semester with this idea of what is the fact pattern calling for? What is the law telling you what to do? I remember actually trying to mimic the style and the organization I was seeing in the cases that I was referencing. I was thinking about what my professor was asking of us. All of a sudden, my scores really started to go up. I think that was because I realized that there was time for creativity but it was not in 1L legal writing.

Keri Clapp: I tell students in 1L legal writing, it all fits together. They're doing all this case reading—we talked about how much time they spend reading cases. If they look at the way a good case opinion is written, they will see exactly what I'm trying to

teach them in a 1L legal methods class. They will see where the facts go, where the law goes, where the argument and the counterargument fits in. They'll see that that's done in the very predictable format and the creativity is in those paragraphs but you know where to find each piece of that opinion. It's the same skills. I think the same skill is transferable to sitting and taking an exam and to the papers that they do in legal methods.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that that's really true. I think one of the things that you also have to appreciate when you come into your first year of law school is that this is a craft. This is a professional school. Legal writing is a craft. People who take it very seriously take it very seriously. I was just talking about this on our last podcast recording—sorry if anyone was listening to that one—but I'm reading [Ruth Bader Ginsburg's book](#). I think it's "In My Own Words," or "My Own Words." It's a compilation of her writing and her speeches, and she's talking about the efforts they go through to craft these opinions. They write and then they take the dissenting opinions into account and then they edit it again. Then they talk to somebody else and they edit it again.

It's just such a good reminder to me that the people who are at the highest level are still working on their craft. She talks about the different styles the judges have, the ones who write in a very succinct way, choose each word carefully, versus judges or justices who might be more verbose. That would just sit with me that at the beginning of your legal career, you may get so caught up in reading these cases and getting your work done, but I think it's always nice to take that step back and remember that you are learning this craft, that even those who are the end of their career or at the top of their game are still doing as well. This is not easy stuff.

Keri Clapp: That's one thing I often tell students if they're thinking about law school and they have time and they want to do something that they might find enjoyable but also will give them a sense of perspective is, there's books out—[The Brethren](#) is an old book by Bob Woodward, [The Nine](#), Jeffrey Toobin, they talk about exactly that: how the Supreme Court crafts their opinions, how they work together to come to opinions. Trust me, you don't have time to read those books once you're actually in law school, so if you can get at least a little glimpse of what happens there, it does help you look at the cases that you're reading when you're doing it as a law student with a different eye.

Lee Burgess: That's true. That's very, very true. Just starting to absorb, because one of the things that you're doing by reading all of these cases in your case books is to absorb the way that this legal analysis is done. Every case you read is part of your education in legal writing.

Keri Clapp: Athletes—I think I sometimes use that analogy, both to teach them about using counter argument and thinking of it as defense to an offense and how a good team has both components, but also how most athletes will do repetitive tests over and over to develop a muscle memory, so that when they're under time

pressure, they don't have to think what goes first. They've done it enough that they've internalized it. It's become muscle memory for them.

Lee Burgess: Right. I think that that's a really great analogy. That is so important because I think one of the other differences between undergrad and law school is often that your entire grade or almost the entire grade is based on one exam at the end of the year. Some schools have midterms. It depends on your law school but even those midterms are often 10%. They don't really have a lot of weight on your grade. It's really all about the end game. I think that that's really different. I remember maybe a class here or there who had a final paper and that was basically your grade, but usually, there was participation and maybe a project. There were a lot of different opportunities like points. That's just not the deal in law school. It's blind grading, sit down in a room. Three to four hours, show what you know. Show that you can think like a lawyer and then hope it goes well.

Keri Clapp: Right. Exactly. A lot of schools are trying to find ways to give students a chance to assess their work either with the help of the professor or on their own throughout the semester. The point of that is to help the students figure out what they need to do. It's not to give them a strong component of their grade as you were saying.

Lee Burgess: Right. Exactly.

Keri Clapp: I have a student now who has been offered an optional midterm where they are given a question. They have the opportunity, if they want, to work it out, to write it up, and then the professor will devote a class to talking about how he would assess that. Some students are going to do that. Even the ones that do, it's not taking weight off their final exam.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think if you are listening to this and you have an optional midterm, you should definitely do it.

Keri Clapp: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Do it. It's totally worth it. Yeah. I think it's great that more law professors are doing that work. To be honest, that's a lot of where we do with our [private tutoring students](#) is we supply them with practice writing and give them feedback throughout the semester, so that by the time they get to the exam, it's not the first time they're writing out one of these essay exam answers or the first time that they're getting feedback from someone other than themselves or a peer because it is very challenging to know if you're doing it right in the beginning.

Keri Clapp: Right. For many students, it's not that they're not capable of learning any particular topic on their own. It's that next step of, "Now, how do I turn that into a tool, along with the hundred other tools that I've learned in this class, to

solve problems.” That's one of the things that we help them practice doing so that when they do it for real, they're better at it.

Lee Burgess: Right. Maybe the last big difference, I think, between undergrad and law school is just the work load. I thought I was busy in undergrad. I was. I had a lot going on. I had two majors, ran an a cappella group. I had a social life. I was busy. I was up late, but I think the work load in law school is very job-like. If you treat it like a job, you are working a solid number of hours a week and a good chunk of time on the weekends. It is pretty consuming with all that you have to do.

Keri Clapp: Yes, definitely. If you are lucky, you are surrounded by people that are doing that as well and that are supporting you and you're enjoying the process. Some people enjoy the process of learning all this great kind of things. Some people don't. Some people have regular paying jobs at the same time that they're going to law school and taking courses. Then I would definitely say for those people, it's a second full-time job.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's really true. Another thing that's interesting—I think Alison and I have mentioned this in one of our podcasts about choosing your law school—is if you are getting decision letters now, which it's about that time of year, and you're trying to pick between law schools. If you're coming directly from undergrad, it is important to think about whether or not you're joining a campus where it is mostly [commuter campus](#). Like you said, people may live far away from school. They might have a job and be going to school. That may be a very different community for you than the undergraduate campus that you're used to where maybe everybody lives on campus or near campus and you're surrounded by your peers all the time. I think that's something that a lot of people don't think about. The different law schools really have different feelings.

There's a law school in San Francisco that's in a neighborhood where it's not particularly easy to find housing. Even though most people come to the city, they're spread out all over town because it's hard to live right next to school. It also has a different feel. I think some folks going straight through can feel a little bit of a sense of that loss of community that you might have had in undergrad as well.

Keri Clapp: I think that's probably increasingly the case as students take time off in between.

Lee Burgess: I think that's true. Yeah because you have a lot of people who come to law school with lives fully set up, or even significant others or spouses, living situations, kids, dogs, life responsibilities that are going to have to be balanced with the requirements of law school.

Keri Clapp: Right.

Lee Burgess: What do you think are some of the misconceptions that you hear from your undergraduates about the law school experience?

Keri Clapp: I think that they run the gamut between students that assume that because they like arguing or they like reading about legal topics, that that means they will enjoy law school and want to actually be a lawyer. I think that's one of the misconceptions. I always encourage people to take different opportunities to see what lawyers do and see if that appeals to what they want to do. I think another misconception is thinking that the skillset that they have in college, because they're a good student in college, they will automatically be a good student in whatever graduate school, including law school, they choose to pursue. I'm not sure whether that's the case. I certainly don't think I would have been a successful med student. I was a very good student and nobody would have discouraged me from going to medical school. But having seen people go through it, I think I would have struggled with some of the demands and some of the skillsets that just weren't strengths of mine.

Lee Burgess: The people who choose to go to graduate school, almost all of them are good students who have an interest or some skills that relate to what they're pursuing. Pretty much everyone in your law school class is going to have gotten pretty good grades in undergrad, have writing skills, probably did some extracurriculars and that's your whole class. You're going to be curved against that whole class of population that did pretty well in undergrad. I think it's a different playing field. That can be sobering, too. Just because you were successful in university, you are going to walk into your law school seminar and almost everybody in there was pretty successful at university.

Keri Clapp: Right. I actually encourage students that their serious about law school, to go sit in on a class at a couple of different law schools, to get a sense for what the conversation is, what the vibe seems to be between the students and the professors, to get something other than what they see on TV about what lawyers do. You can sometimes pick up on those things the same way you would have picked up on them as a high school student touring a college campus when it was in session. You get a sense for what the community of learning is going to be.

Lee Burgess: That's really great advice. If you're on a campus right now as an undergraduate where they have a law school, I bet you could just go stick your head into a law school class every now and then.

Keri Clapp: Yeah. I think they generally have you jump through a few hoops, give your ID and they generally ask the professor if they would permit it. But every time I've had a student go so far as to inquire, they've been able to find a class that they could sit it on. It's been good.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's really great advice. How do you find it teaching undergraduates versus law students? I've got to ask who are your favorites, necessarily. How do you find working with the two different populations?

Keri Clapp: I'm teaching such a different topic to each of them. I get the privilege with undergraduates—for some of them, they've never really thought about how our legal system is set up the way it is or why it matters. They see the Constitution written hundreds of years ago. Why would that be relevant to my life if I'm planning on owning a business or taking this career path? I break it down and we talk about how the whole structure of our society is filled with ways in which the law impacts what you do as an individual, as a business person, as an employee, as an employer. I really get to open the eyes of a lot of people who haven't thought about this legal environment that surrounds them. That's fun.

Lee Burgess: Didn't I see on social media that you are really diving into the Constitution right now with your undergraduates as well? It has to be fascinating given the state of the world.

Keri Clapp: It's fascinating to me. I hope that it's fascinating to some of them. This semester, I have a very early class. It's very hard to get college students fascinated by anything at 8:30 in the morning. It's really a prime time to say I can point to almost any page in the constitutional law section of their textbook and we can find something that was headline news that week. Where people are talking about who should decide big issues—the states or the federal government? Which branch of government? What's the role? It makes it very relevant in a way that I think many of them thought it wasn't relevant. Most people think that the law is the law. Most students are surprised to learn that judges write opinions. That is law just like what the legislature puts into effect. They're surprised by that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I always found it interesting, too, how as history has changed, so does the law and the courts. The courts deciding that the times require some new law, so they just create something different. They abolish something. They create a new rule based on what's happening currently. The United States, culturally or politically, the fact that it lives and breathes and changes I think is something that I didn't really appreciate I think until I started studying the law itself.

Keri Clapp: Well, I think that's great, too. I'll ask them what they picture themselves doing five years from now, and try, then, to show that whatever path they think they're going to take to make a living, some part of the textbook that we're going to be working through is going to have a significant impact on what they're able to do and on the rules that their employer has to follow. Sometimes, the law moves pretty quickly. We talk about how there's been a big change that has happened since they started at college. They're surprised to hear that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting. They don't print the law books all that frequently. You get these packets that are usually like paper addendums that you may purchase a supplement or an addendum to your case book that are the cases that just came out in the last year or two. Sometimes, they haven't even been officially published, so they don't even have the true citation in them, that the law professors feel that they need to be teaching.

Keri Clapp: Yes. Some professors never make it out of the 1700s.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Keri Clapp: There's value to that, too, because sometimes, an issue comes up that nobody's really thought about for a really long time, and it's part of our legal system and we have to pull it out and dust it off. See what it tells us about what people can and can't do now.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Keri Clapp: I added a slide on the emoluments clause to my undergrad lecture. I admit I had never spent any time thinking about it until this year. But it's something that lawyers will spend time thinking about now.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. As well as a lot of rights around immigration. What were the different individual rights that somebody has as a citizen, as a Visa holder, as an immigrant, as an illegal immigrant. It is amazing that any copy of the New York Times is just filled with constitutional issues.

Keri Clapp: Yes. I get business students. A lot of them had thought about these issues. I try to show them that understanding the way the system is set up is important whichever way your political leanings go. It's important to understand what your arguments are for one conclusion and what your opponent might be arguing and to think about them. The best students coming into law school have some experience with critical thinking, with not just reaching a conclusion but asking, "Why do I think this? Where are the weaknesses of my position?" Students that come out of undergrad with the ability to think critically about issues have a leg up in law school.

Lee Burgess: I think that that's a really good point. A great example of that is the fact that in law school—I'm not sure if the undergrad case books do this—it's a big deal if they include a dissenting opinion in the case book. They oftentimes do especially for Supreme Court cases. Many law professors will require you to understand what the dissenter said as well as what the majority said. I think in the beginning, you think, "Well, that's silly. The dissenting law isn't law," in most cases. But the dissenting opinion can have a lot of interesting points. It can actually show you how different factional situations could get a different outcome. It can have you look forward at the future and sometimes, those

dissenting opinions become the rule in the future as the courts start to change law, if the law were changed. It is interesting.

I think you're right. It's this critical thinking. It's enjoying getting into the language and really appreciating who these casts of characters are of Supreme Court justices and federal judges and state judges as well, depending on the class, and this conversation they're having about things that really make a big difference in how many of us live our lives at various points.

Keri Clapp: Right.

Lee Burgess: Of course, we like this because you and I are nerdy enough to want to spend all of our time reading and thinking about this stuff.

Keri Clapp: Yup.

Lee Burgess: If you find this fascinating, too, you should go to law school.

Keri Clapp: One of the things that I really encourage students to do with their thinking about law school is to spend a little bit of time trying to identify how you learn fast because for the brightest student, the most well-prepared student will find law school challenging. I have yet to find anyone who says law school wasn't challenging. I found many people who did very well, who loved it, who enjoyed it, but I've never met anyone who said it was a breeze. Law school's challenging. One of the best things you can do if you're thinking about law school or thinking about any type of graduate study, is to give a little thought now to what works for you, because we all learn differently. We all take in information in different ways and internalize it in a way that works for us. The more you can identify what works for you: do you study best alone? Do you need to write things down? Does it help you to listen to podcasts? Those type of pieces, the more you understand about how you learn, the better off you'll be when you are in a challenging learning situation.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that that's a really great point, coupled with your advice on visiting law school classes, reading some interesting books before you get ready to go to law school. Alison—we'll link to this in the podcast—did [a great series over on the Girls' Guide to Law School about informational interviewing](#). I think as an undergrad, it's a great time to try and meet lawyers and talk to them about what they do to make sure you want to go to law school. Informational interviewing can give you a framework for that. One of the best questions I think to ask lawyers when you're getting ready to go to law school is: what do you do every day?

I think so often, when you're thinking about having a career as a lawyer, you might think about *The Good Wife*. They're in trial every day. Intrigue, or lots of fast-moving, exciting things that, for most lawyers, is not really how it goes. My dad still does litigation. He was like, "Oh, the trial was continued again."

Everything actually moves very slowly and the day to day work that you end up doing is not necessarily that fast-paced. Talking to lawyers and really understanding what lawyers do as a day in the life, I think is very helpful in deciding if this is a path that interests you.

Keri Clapp: Definitely. Definitely. It's also a good skill to learn just in the world today, this whole concept of informational interviewing. Talking to someone to listen to what they have to say as opposed to calling them up and saying, "What can you do for me?" If you can do a few informational interviews when you're ready to find a job in your chosen field whether it's law or something else, you've learned some of the basics of networking, because you've learned to listen, not just ask for something.

Lee Burgess: Yup. I think that that's really wise. If you aren't really a fan of talking to people, you can also read biographies, which is something I like to do in my free time. I find different people's stories about their paths to be quite interesting. Different folks even talking about their transition to law school. I just read another fascinating book that I will link to in the show notes that was talking about a [young man who grew up in the Rust Belt and then he ends up at Yale Law School](#). He talks a lot about what it was like to grow up in the Rust Belt, but then how you make this transition to go to a very elite law school and how that was a very much of a culture shock to him. It's fascinating stuff.

If you're someone who is thinking, "Wow. If I go to one of these law schools, I have no idea what that experience is going to be like." It can be really helpful to read about other people's experiences. That's another option if you don't feel like you have access to a lot of lawyers is go to the library. Yeah.

Keri Clapp: Good idea.

Lee Burgess: All right. Well with that, we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on iTunes. We'd really appreciate it. Be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. New episodes are typically released on Monday. Don't forget to learn more about Start Law School Right at our course page, lawschooltoolbox.com/courses/join/, including information on upcoming contest where you have an opportunity to win a free Start Law School Right Silver Course package. You can also keep up to date with all our offerings on our Facebook page, which is facebook.com/lawschooltoolbox/.

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com and you can always contact us via our website, contactforum@lawschooltoolbox.com. If you are thinking of starting law school in the fall, we recommend that you check out our Start Law School Right course which is offered on demand any time throughout the summer that can help you get ready for law school. If you have any interest in talking to Keri and how she

can help you in your legal journey, you're welcome to reach out to her through our website as well. Thanks for listening and we'll talk soon.

Resources:

- [Podcast Episode 1: Mindset – The Key to Success in Law School?](#)
- [Podcast Episode 43: Getting Mentally Prepared to Start Law School](#)
- [Podcast Episode 7: Time and Life Management Basics](#)
- [Podcast Episode 17: Where to Get Help in Law School](#)
- [Podcast Episode 2: Why Is Law School Hard?](#)
- [How to Conduct Great Informational Interviews](#)
- [Ginsberg, Ruth Bader. My Own Words. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016.](#)
- [Toobin, Jeffrey. The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.](#)
- [Vance, J.D. Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2016.](#)
- [Woodward, Bob. The Brethren: Inside the Supreme Court. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.](#)