Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: Hello, and welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about law school extracurriculars, all those things that you do not get graded for or paid for that you might still want to do. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, that's me, and Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be.

Together, we're the co creators of the Law School Toolbox, Bar Exam Toolbox, the Catapult Career Conference, and the Trebuchet Legal Career site. I also run the Girl's Guide to Law School. If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on iTunes, and 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. And with that, let's get started.

Lee Burgess: Welcome back. Today we're talking about law school extracurricular activities. So first off, do law students really need to do extracurricular activities because isn't getting good grades really the most important thing and keep you plenty busy?

Alison Monahan: Well, I think that's a great question. I don't think it's like undergrad where, you know, you're doing all of these extracurriculars because you want to apply to grad school or that kind of thing.

But at the same time, I think there are some pretty valid reasons to do extracurricular activities. Sometimes people get really caught up in this grade thing and they're like studying 15 hours a day and that kind of thing. I don't know. I mean, I kind of feel like that's a little bit of overkill for most people.

What do you think?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I mean, I think that the extracurricular activities really create some sort of a balance and get you out of the books which I think can be a good thing for both your interest in the law, like sometimes extracurriculars can get you excited about what you're studying, as well as they can be a good way to network with people, they can add some padding to your resume, even if your grades aren't that great, extracurriculars can be really impressive, and they give you something to talk about in an interview, which is also nice, like, what's more exciting to talk about, like, what was discussed in your criminal procedure class, or, you know, this pro bono project you worked on as part of your clinic, so.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think that's a great point, I mean, I Yeah, like, of course, grades are really important and that should be your primary focus, but, you know, we often encourage students to spend, say, 10 percent of their time thinking about jobs, and particularly your first year, and even, you know, to some extent your second year, these extracurriculars are really, they can be a very good, sort of, like, basis for getting a job, because, you know, the reality is, if you go into an interview and there's just nothing on your resume, people have nothing to talk to you about.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so it's like, It's really painful if you get one of these resumes where it's like, I'm in the top 10 percent of my class, and that's it. And you're like okay, do you have any interests in anything that we could possibly have a conversation about? You know, this goes back to our resume episode, like there should be something that people can talk to you about on your resume.

But, you know, particularly if you're interested in going a certain direction in the law, I think these extracurriculars can be a really great way to sort of position yourself and make it at least appear that you're serious about it.

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm. And I just think that so often, especially if you're getting down a bit in your law school experience, extracurriculars just create a new excitement.

And I was actually talking to someone who was studying for the bar, and he was talking about how volunteering at a legal aid office in law school really just reignited his passion for the law when he was even considering dropping out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's a great point. I mean, I did a lot of pro bono work my first semester and it was this thing where you're like, you know, you're so like, Oh my gosh, is this really like the right thing to do? It's so abstract, like all we're doing is reading these boring cases, and then I would go to family court in the Bronx and be like, oh, wow, yeah, this is like real life. This is what lawyers do, you know, it's not, it just, I think it can be a good counterpoint to, you know, the sort of academic, like, ivory tower model of law school that people can kind of get sucked into if all you're doing is reading cases.

Lee Burgess: I think that's really true.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: And it was more interesting. I mean, you get a good story about it. The time you tried to get, like, everyone in the Bronx Family Court waiting room to do breathing exercises to calm down.

And they're like, Girl, like, what do you think you are? Some kind of California hippie? And I'm like, yes, actually, but it really works. Try it. Well, it's crazy because they put everyone together, like, when you're waiting for family court, everyone waits in the same giant room.

Lee Burgess: And family court is, like,

Alison Monahan: Like, pretty contentious.

Lee Burgess: Really contentious. Isn't it some, some crazy statistic, like, more, I think there's more violence against attorneys and judges in family court than in criminal court or places where they really think that there are more violent people.

Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, I don't doubt it. It's like, of course if they, you know, like people show up who are in this like sufficiently contentious family relationship that they need to go to court about it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You know, you probably should have, like, separate holding rooms for each side.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, especially, like, some of that stuff is about abuse. And,

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's crazy. There'd be, like, kids everywhere and people are having these giant arguments, you know, but, like, it was interesting. I mean, it got me out of, like, you know, the Columbia ivory tower for sure.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. So yeah, so this stuff is interesting and you should do some research and, you know, go to some info sessions and learn about what possible extracurriculars are available at your school, but we can run down kind of a list of the ones that, you know, we think are some of the most common ones and what, what we know about them and if we've done them and if we think they are, you know, worthwhile.

So, the first thing I know we both did was we were both on a law review.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think that's, you know, sort of the first question people have is should I join the Law Review? Like, do I need to join the Law Review? Is my

career over if I don't join the Law Review? You know, how do I join the Law Review?

Which, you know, if I can't join Law Review, which journal should I join? But, I mean, let's kind of back up a second. Like, what even, like, what is a Law Review?

Lee Burgess: Well, now I'm like double checking with myself, but I believe every ABA accredited school has to have a Law Review. Isn't that true?

Alison Monahan: Do they? I don't know. That's interesting.

Lee Burgess: I don't know. We should Google that. But I'm pretty sure that it's a requirement. Which is why every school has one. But It's definitely a privilege to be on the Law Review, and every school can have their separate entrance requirements. My school, it was partly due to your grade and your standing in the class after the first year, and then you also had to do what was called a write on, where you did a writing assignment, and those, you got like a score for that, and a score for your ranking, and you know, you put those together and then they took the top, you know, 45 people or whatever to join the law review.

Different schools do it differently, but basically you produce a law journal. You take articles written by students, articles written by professors or practitioners the law review board, which is of 3L students Pretty much puts together this publication. You do, you know, I think you do, we did four a year.

Does that sound right? Something along those lines. Yeah, I mean, I think it probably varies, but yeah, basically it's a scholarly journal. And the weird thing about the law is we don't have, typically have peer reviewed journals like they do in a lot of other, pretty much every other academic discipline actually.

Alison Monahan: So Instead of professors editing articles and deciding what articles are going to go into the journals and that kind of thing, it's actually students, which is a little crazy when you think about it. So, you know, if you're on the board of a law review, you might be getting articles from, like, all these really prestigious professors all over the country.

And your editorial board is the one deciding whether their work is going to be published.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and there are times when you are editing very impressive people's work that is quite humbling, you know, when I'm, you know, literally making

grammatical edits or suggestions about, you know, form or how things are written to someone who way out ranks me in the the grand scheme of academia.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I mean sometimes you see articles and you're like, wow, this is not very well written and this person is really famous.

Lee Burgess: Yep, it's very true.

Alison Monahan: It can definitely be an interesting experience.

Lee Burgess: And you end up doing assignments when you get on as a 2L. You do need to join as a 2L, but you end up doing a lot of assignments and checking citations and sources and things like that.

It's a bit of grunt work.

Alison Monahan: I say a lot of grunt work.

Lee Burgess: It's a lot of grunt work.

Alison Monahan: A lot of, a lot of hours spent in like the bowels of libraries that you never knew existed and like weird locations on campus and things like that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And then and then I was on the board my third year and so I did a lot of that managing of the editors as well as a lot of the editing of the assignments.

And I think for me, law review was a very valuable experience because it did somewhat hone my writing craft. Nothing forces you to really judge your own writing than judging other people's writing, I think.

Alison Monahan: Right. Yeah, I mean, for me, like I definitely, I didn't know any, I mean, I was terrible at like blue booking and citations until I did law review. And then you get pretty good at it pretty quickly because that's all you're doing for a year.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You know, multiple hours a week, multiple times per week. You definitely, it's good for that sort of thing. I mean, personally, I couldn't stand the law review and I kind of hated every second I did it.

Lee Burgess: Mm-Hmm.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: But, it was, you know, I mean, basically, it definitely looks good on a resume, certainly for particular types of jobs, like if you're interested in clerkships, for example, judges, like, really like to see law review. I mean, on balance, I guess it was, like, sort of worth doing, but I can't say that I particularly enjoyed it, so I decided not to apply for the board my third year, and I was the I think it was the staff photographer and social, no, I wasn't social chair, that, that plum job went to someone else I was the, I was the alumni liaison, which meant I had to plan an alumni banquet, which was basically sort of like being social chair, so.

Lee Burgess: You do plan a good party, what can I say?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, you know, my talent, my true talents came out. I was not cut out to do, you know, detailed edits. to professors articles. But if you wanted to throw a good party, I was your girl.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So I think if you're interested in Law Review it's worth finding out what the requirements are for your school.

Usually the write on assignment is done after final exams, so that's-

Alison Monahan: Although not always. I talked to someone yesterday who said that they had a bluebooking competition in three weeks.

Lee Burgess: What?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so by the time this episode comes out, she'll probably be doing the bluebooking competition.

Lee Burgess: Oh my gosh, so that really means that you need to find out what the requirements are for your school, so you can make sure that you plan for it.

And, you know, if it's during the year, you plan for it, but also if it's after the semester's over, you need to plan your summer schedule around spending a few more days doing the write on.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I made a bad mistake on that one, because I started my summer job like, maybe 2 or 3 days after finals ended, thinking like, oh, no big deal. I'll just, like, do this other stuff.

I'll do the writing competition in the evenings after I go to this job. Haha. Yeah, right. It was really a terrible idea, really terrible. Because I was actually a

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

summer associate, and so What I hadn't counted on were kind of these parties and things that I was like, oh, they won't mind if I don't show up.

It's like, oh, they will mind if you don't show up to, like, the opening party of the summer. They don't care. You know, and of course, like, lip service, like, oh, yeah, of course, you know, we're happy to support your writing competition. We want you to join Law Review. But reality was, like, you know, it was a lot of late nights and you know, a lot, a lot more stress than I really needed at that point.

I could have just started working, like, a week later and things probably would have been a lot easier.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, for sure. So-

Alison Monahan: And it can be even worse if you're like, planning to go abroad or something.

Lee Burgess: Mm-Hmm.

Alison Monahan: You know, like, you definitely just wanna plan for that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Do your homework now. Find out what the requirements are.

Alison Monahan: And what if people can't, don't think they're gonna be able to get onto the law review, I mean, do they have other options?

Lee Burgess: Most schools have multiple journals. Oftentimes. You know, for a specific subject area, like an environmental law journal, or a law and technology journal, and I think that those are great to get involved in too. They're typically not as competitive as the law review, but they still give you some of the same experience and for jobs and clerkships and all of that kind of stuff. Having that journal experience is really what they're looking for. So I do think that working on a journal is valuable experience no matter what journal it is.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think you can be smart about it. You know, if you know that you want to put this on your resume.

But you don't think you're competitive for the law review, or you're just really not willing to commit that much time and energy to it. You know, you can join a sort of less demanding journal, and then you don't have to answer the question that inevitably is going to come up in a, you know, if you're interviewing for a clerkship or whatever.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

It's like, why are you not doing a law journal? You can be like, oh, you know, I was really interested in this specialty journal in like, you know, human rights or whatever. Although at Columbia, the human rights journal was almost as demanding as the law review. And you know, most schools have sort of a hierarchy where some of them are more or less prestigious, some of them are more or less work.

And you know, I think it's valid if somebody, like for example, my law school roommate, it was the year below me, she was like, should I apply for the law review? And I'm like, why don't you just join the journal that you're actually interested in? Like, I know you don't want to do this. I know, like, so I think it's valid.

You know, if you have a good reason not to apply for the law review, I think it's totally valid. You just have to understand the trade offs.

Lee Burgess: And actually my, now I'm thinking about it, my second semester 1L year, I did some one off work for a journal, which I think was a good introduction to my law review work.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, one of my other law school roommates did that too. There were certain journals that would take one L's basically. It's like to do the real grunt work.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But you know, it was good because she got exposure to the whole experience. She got exposure to site checking. I think she actually ended up joining that journal ultimately in the end and it was like on the board of it or something.

So, you know, it was, It was a good opportunity if you're kind of curious about it or you really want to work on your citations.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. And attention to detail, which is incredibly important when you practice law or really in anything.

Alison Monahan: Yes, yes. I mean, you know, as much as, like, people like to complain about Law Review, and trust me, I was definitely one of those people, it is, you know, it does give you certain skills that you're just not going to develop otherwise because you are simply not going to spend that much time doing citations on your own as being forced to do it, you know, hundreds of hours over the course of a semester. The other thing we should mention is, you know, the more fun

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

part of law review for a lot of people is, or law journals, is you can actually write an article yourself.

Yeah. So, you know, you can write a note. You're probably, well, you're probably going to be required to write a note if you're on the law review, and then some of them get published, and some of them don't get published, so that, you know, if you're into that sort of thing, it could be kind of cool to, like, pick a topic you're interested in, maybe spread your knowledge to the world, you know, that kind of thing.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And even my school had a class that facilitated the writing of a note.

Alison Monahan: Oh thats good.

Lee Burgess: Yeah it was taught by a professor who was actually the Advisor of the Law Review and almost everyone in the class was on the Law Review. But we used that class to, you know, to develop our notes with this professor's help and it was a great experience and it was a bit of a writing boot camp but it was a, it was a really good class, so you never know, there may be classes that you ask around school that even help facilitate production of, of papers that can turn into notes or or other articles.

Alison Monahan: Right. And most schools have a like long writing requirement anyways. Yeah. Probably have to do some sort of writing. And also, if, you know, depending on what you're applying for, you're going to need a writing sample, so, you know, it's just a good thing to plan around.

Like, plan on some sort of like capstone writing assignment, whether it's for The Law Review Note or some other sort of thing.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And, you know, often times you can actually submit papers to other journals or competitions.

Lee Burgess: Yeah

Alison Monahan: So that's another thing to look at is does it have to be just at your school? We're always getting emails about like, hey, does, you know, people need to write for, like, you know, the Federal Indian Law, whatever, like, competition.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

So, you know, you can, if you have an interest in an area, you might be able to actually parlay that into some broader exposure, which is always good.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: It looks awesome on your resume if you're like, I was the winner of this, like, writing competition nationwide. You know, that's going to attract attention.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, absolutely.

Alison Monahan: And you've already written it, so why not use it?

Lee Burgess: Exactly, shop it around. Alright, what about moot court? Moot court differs typically from school to school. My school had a student run moot court program, so although it had faculty advisors, moot court, which is where the 1Ls do appellate arguments and draft briefs, it was actually run by a student board with faculty advisors.

So one of the kind of competing extracurriculars to do if you were doing well academically was to be on the moot court board.

Alison Monahan: Hmm. Interesting.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think ours was basically like just the second semester of legal writing.

Lee Burgess: Hmm. Yeah, we had to do it as part of legal writing, second semester, but we had, like, our final exam and then we had this month of moot court.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I just remember we had to do an oral argument and that was about all I remember.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Actually, what I remember is having really bad laryngitis and being really concerned no one was going to be able to hear me.

Lee Burgess: That's fine.

Alison Monahan: And, which might have helped my performance because I ended up getting the best oral argument.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Lee Burgess: Mine was on this very, like, bizarre fact pattern and it was if someone who has a deadly disease intentionally bites your ear,

Alison Monahan: Oh God.

Lee Burgess: If that is assault with a deadly weapon.

Alison Monahan: Wow. I mean, I would be like, yes, game over, move on. But I'm guessing there's more to it than that.

Lee Burgess: There's a little more to it than that.

Alison Monahan: I have no idea what ours was about. I think it might've been about, actually what I think it was about may have been A bar question. When I took the California Bar, one of the MPTs was on the exact same thing I did my moot court on. I think it was something, it was so, I couldn't believe it. I got the packet and was like, oh my God, I know all of this.

Lee Burgess: Oh my gosh, that's so funny.

Alison Monahan: It was something about like employment law for like, it was like public employees and like what they could do or not do in their private time.

Lee Burgess: Oh yeah, I know that, PT, yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I took that one, that was my moot court question.

Lee Burgess: That's really funny. So, so you never know.

Alison Monahan: That might be why I passed the bar.

Lee Burgess: Maybe. Thank you, Moot Court.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because I was, I was really able to skim through that law. I was like, yup, I know this like the back of my hand.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. All right, so if you are also one of these folks who likes to be in academia, you can also be research assistants for professors. That's often a popular way to make some side money.

Alison Monahan: Definitely. Well, let's back up one more thing on Moot Court.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Lee Burgess: Oh, yeah.

Alison Monahan: There are also all these, like, again, like, sort of national level moot court competitions.

Lee Burgess: Oh, that's right, yeah.

Alison Monahan: And certain schools are really into this type of thing. They're like, you know, they always win. But this is worth looking into, like, if you're somebody who really wants to be a litigator and you want to, like, hone your courtroom skills and that kind of thing, you know, like, you have to do the one, probably, at your school, but you also probably have options on doing, you know, some specialty moot court that's more, like, you know, national in scope, and that can be really exciting.

Again, you know, if you're, like, a finalist or you win, like, that's pretty awesome.

Lee Burgess: Yep. And even yeah, in my school, I had an Advocacy of the Year program. I guess it was an advocate of the year program, where they would do a competition year two out year that you could take a part in and it was a, you know, there was one person who won the whole thing.

And yeah, that's a great for your resume just within the school, let alone moving on to a, you know, larger scale competition.

Alison Monahan: Yeah and you know, it's like this has to be something you're interested in. You know, you can't just do it, like, to put it on your resume, but if it is an area of interest, like maybe law review is not the greatest fit because you really want to be in the courtroom.

You know, I think about different courts and things or, you know, other competitions. I think there's like ones for negotiation.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You know, there are all these options that I'm not sure I was really aware of when I was in school. Anyway back to being a research.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Back to being a research assistant. So professors hire students to help them with all sorts of things because professors are supposed to be publishing, and so they need people to help them do that.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: And typically they have a budget for those people?

Lee Burgess: They have a budget so you can get paid, and I think that, I have known students to be research assistants both during the school year and even over the summer, so there are often a lot of opportunities.

This is another great reason to get to know the professors that you are interested in knowing and do work that you're interested in, but also to keep your eye out if they're asking for applications. But I think a lot of times, professors will just ask students they have relationships with if they want to be their research assistants.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. And you know, obviously this is a great way to build a relationship. If you're interested in clerkships, fantastic for your references. You know, you're gonna need letters of reference. What better than a professor who's like, this person was incredibly helpful for my research on this topic.

I couldn't have written this book without them. You know, that's a pretty strong endorsement for a judge who's basically looking for someone who can do research for them.

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm. That's so true. Yeah. Oh, and you know what? I just, I'm looking at our list of things you can do in law school. We left off one is something you and I both did, which was to be TAs.

Alison Monahan: Oh, that's a great point. Yes. Absolutely. You can be a TA in law school. Totally forgot about that one.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So that's also typically you're asked by either academic support or by individual professors to be a teaching assistant and kind of help out 1Ls on classes that you did well in.

I did this for a number of semesters and then I also was paid by the school to even do some private tutoring on the side as well, so, it can be a great extracurricular, and also that looks great on your resume, to say that you were a teaching assistant.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and again, like, it allows you to build that relationship.

So, you know, if you slave away as a teaching assistant for someone, they're probably going to in turn write you a letter of recommendation.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: And, you know, because they know you better, they might be inclined to even pick up the phone and, like, take that extra little step for you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So anything you can do to kind of, you know, build these relationships with your professors outside of class, I think is a really, is typically a good idea.

Lee Burgess: I agree. Alright, we've talked a bit about pro bono work. Do you have anything else to talk about the importance of trying to do some pro bono work?

Alison Monahan: Well, I think it's just a great way to kind of practice being a lawyer. And as we talked about earlier, to get that perspective of like, you know, people with actual problems in the world beyond just like, they're not sure they're going to get an A on their law school exam.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And, you know, it's a great way to meet, like, practicing lawyers because you're going to have to be supervised.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So typically, you know, if you were looking for mentors in an area or just want to build some relationships with lawyers in the community, like, you're going to have somebody who's basically in charge of making sure you don't really screw this up.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah, that's a very good point.

Alison Monahan: But, I mean, you know, that being said, I think you have to be careful about the time commitments. Right. And sometimes things happen, you know, in the real world at times where you're supposed to be in class or something like that.

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm.

Alison Monahan: So you just have to understand that, like, there may be this trade off , and you have to be sure, you know, like you can't just, if you, if you're doing pro bono work, you actually have a client.

Right. So you can't just be like, oh, sorry, I have to go to contracts class.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: That's not really, the judge is not going to be happy about that. So, you know, you have to make sure that you actually have the bandwidth to be, and at the, at the appropriate times to be able to do this. But, you know, oftentimes you can get these sort of like one off projects you know, where they're not ongoing, where maybe you go down, I think I did for like, people who've been denied unemployment benefits, you know, so it's kind of like one hearing and you know when the hearing is going to be and you know, you meet with your client the week before or whatever and then you go at the specific time and then it's over.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: You know, contrast that to like a divorce case I did as a lawyer pro bono that dragged on for three years.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: You know, so you just have to be smart about what you're getting into, I think.

Lee Burgess: So another thing that I actually think is a really great opportunity that people often overlook is just doing other things in your community that interest you. And I think law students really get caught up in the idea that everything that they do outside of going to class should be law related, and I think that that's kind of a mistake.

I think that if you have other passions, especially that could be related to some sort of way to give back to your community, whether it be through community volunteer work, or you know, working as part of a charity or volunteering for a charity, I think you can meet a lot of really interesting people, you can expand your network just outside of your your law school, you can often times meet lawyers or business people that may even help you network or, you know, look for job opportunities.

And I think it can just be a good thing to give back to the world at a time when you're kind of inherently selfish, you know, that's not to say that, you know, I think that's just part of the law school experience. It's a kind of an inherently selfish experience and, you know, getting out and doing something else you care about, I think it's a really great reality check, but also just makes you feel good to give back to the community.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and, you know, this doesn't have to be, again, like a huge ongoing commitment. It can be something as simple as, like, volunteering at a food bank for a few hours.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: I'm, you know, a big supporter of the San Francisco Food Bank and they're always happy to have people show up for three or four hours and it's kind of fun, you know, you're like, you're actually doing something physical, you're packing bags of rice or you're like counting out oranges and it's just like, whoa, this is like real stuff.

Lee Burgess: I actually have a friend who met her husband volunteering at the food bank doing just that.

Alison Monahan: Wow. Yeah, there you go. I know. Yeah, I mean, I went once when summer associates were at our law firm, and they were like, "oh we'll do this activity", and so I'm taking them to a fancy lunch, and it was really interesting, because the other group that was there was a group of recovering addicts. You know, and it was like, it was kind of interesting to see people in law school and their summer associates kind of reacting to that to that. First, they're like, "oh my gosh, these people are so crazy, but then, you know, a few hours in, it's like, everybody's friends, they're all joking, you know, so I think it's a good eye opener for a lot of people, too.

Lee Burgess: I think it is. And you know, also, like Alison was saying, even with the law review, that she got to plan a party and that that was kind of a fun thing to do. I'm on the board of a non profit, you know, we have a gala coming up and we're, you know, we're collecting people who want to, you know, support the gala and volunteer for that.

And I think in law school, even something like that could've been really fun just to be creative and do something outside of the box. Again, you can have to check your time commitments, but it can be really nice to just get outside of the law school bubble a little bit and interact with other people.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and sometimes even in the law school setting, you have the opportunity to do things like a little bit outside of the box, like plan parties or events, you know, people often wonder about law student clubs, like, you know, do I need to join every club that I can possibly join? I mean, I did that my first semester.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

I don't think anyone cared. I mean, I had a lot of stuff to put on my resume. I think I was on the board of like three organizations. But again, like, you know, in the end, I, you know, kind of stopped doing a lot of them because I didn't find them that useful. But I did, like, I liked planning social events and, you know, so I was on the board as a 1L of like the Older Wiser Law Students Association Basically, all that meant was that I planned a bar night, like, every other month, you know, or I think it was on the board of the Entertainment Law Society, too and I think the real estate one as well, but, you know, and maybe, like, two others, but you know, it was actually kind of nice because you could call up people that you wanted to meet and be like, hey, you know, we'd really love to have you give a talk on this topic, and, you know, again, like, it's a way to build a relationship, but, like, I found that fun, like, I like planning stuff.

Yeah. Or like the PILF, like the Public Interest Law Foundation, always has a big gala every year.

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm.

Alison Monahan: And you know, like, I thought it was fun to, like, decide who was going to serve the food and, you know, pick out the cups and things like that, you know, as Lena is like, I love doing that stuff.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But I think you just have to be, you know, you have to sort of, I think it is, you know, I think, I don't think it's a bad thing to, like, get involved at school and join some clubs and things. But again, like, you have to be cognizant of your time commitment.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, for sure. And sometimes, you know, these organizations can, like you said, facilitate even networking when you and I have both spoken at events at law schools that are hosted by different clubs and sometimes they even have-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think we actually, we hired someone from like, you know, one of those type of events for a while.

Lee Burgess: We did. We also also, So you can often use their mentoring programs. A lot of clubs have mentoring programs that can help you get outlines and advice from 2Ls and 3Ls. It can be a nice way to meet upperclassmen. And a lot of people find that affinity groups can be particularly useful. And like I was on the board of women's, women in the law and things like that.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you have a lot of like ethnic and racial ones, like the BALSA, all the ALSAs as we call them, you know, the Black Law Students Association, the like Asian American Law Students Association. I mean, there's probably one for just about anything you can imagine.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I think you know, oftentimes a lot of people find that they can get social support or mentorship opportunities through those clubs, and that it's, it's a really great way to add to their experience.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think they can be a safe place to, to talk about things that maybe you could, can't talk about quite so publicly necessarily.

Lee Burgess: That's a good point.

Alison Monahan: If you go to a social event with people who are kind of like your people and suddenly everybody starts being like, oh, yeah, like I've, I've noticed that too you know, I think it's just a good, it can be a safe place for people to kind of, you know, get some support, particularly if you're not, you know, the sort of like upper class white male paradigm of a law student.

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm. A lot of law students maybe who did student government in undergrad are interested in doing student government in your law school or even a larger university.

Alison Monahan: Oh my gosh, I couldn't believe how competitive the students were. I mean, I guess it's not surprising. But I just remember, because like, I was never, I couldn't care less about student government.

Lee Burgess: Never.

Alison Monahan: But I just remember, like, people were like, you know, their campaign posters, they were like, you know, desecrating other people's campaign posters. My gosh. It was just like, are you joking? And then you realize like, of course, like this is a, this is a population of people who go to law school. as people who are like really serious about student government.

Lee Burgess: But again, if you like that, that's great. But I did see student government take a huge amount of time from people. So you know, all this stuff is a balance. Like I wouldn't try and do everything on this list that we're running through. You have to pick and choose.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: No, I think you have to pick and choose. Absolutely. And you know, it depends on like what your tolerance is for certain things too.

Like, you know, my tolerance for planning parties and like the details of that is very high. My tolerance for sitting through like a four hour student government meeting and then dealing with a lot of irate, like group emails afterwards is basically nil.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So that was not gonna be a good fit for me.

No. I'm happy to plan, you know, the entertainment law gala. I'm not gonna sit through a student government meeting. But other people, totally different. So, you know, I mean I think you should, ideally you wanna do something, right?

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You just wanna do something and make sure it just adds to your experience, and don't just feel like, well, I have to do this to check the box on my resume, because if you don't enjoy it and you don't excel at it, I just don't think it's going to really be a benefit.

Alison Monahan: No, because ideally, you know, with any of these things, you want to sort of work your way up. So, you know, your first year, you kind of join, maybe not law review, but a lot of the other ones, you know, you join, you get involved.

And then your second and third year, by the third year, you want to be basically running it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You know, because that's, A, it's more fun, and B, it looks better on your resume.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Very true.

Alison Monahan: I mean, there are other things you know you gave tours or something.

Lee Burgess: I did. I would give tours or go to admitted student lunches and stuff like that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think we hosted a bunch of student, admitted students. I had like 10 people sleeping on my floor.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: Which in retrospect, I was like, why was I doing that?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so that can be fun. You know, it's a nice way to meet people in the administration of your school. If you like your school, if you don't like your school, maybe that's not a good fit.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, I think I got, like, an umbrella and, like, a nice tote bag out of it. You know, I mean, people, yeah, I mean, you know, again, like, if you enjoy being social, great.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But I do remember it got really overwhelming at some point because I was like, I literally have 10 people, you know, like, we, like, no one else will allow people to stay in their house.

I would just send them my way, and then suddenly you're like, oh my god, we have 10 people sleeping in our apartment.

Lee Burgess: Oh my gosh. And then some people like to do sports for fun.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I wonder who those people are. I don't know who those people are.

Lee Burgess: They're not us.

Alison Monahan: Maybe a yoga club.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, the yoga club. I know.

We should have, if we'd gone to law school together, we could have totally started yoga club. But if you like that, sometimes schools have some some leagues that you can join or maybe in your community. I know I had friends who, you know, played volleyball and did stuff like that just to be able to get out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I know people who completely love things like adult I want to say daycare, but it's not daycare, like adult recess, where it's like a team that goes and plays like games you played when you're five as an adult. I'm like, you know, if that helps you blow off steam, great. Or like adult kickball leagues.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I don't know. But but, yeah, like, you know, in certain schools, this stuff is really popular. I know, like, UVA is famous for their beer softball games. And this might be a good point, you know, to talk about school fit. Like, if these things sound horrible to you, maybe that school is not the best fit for you.

But if you're like, oh my god, I would love that.

Lee Burgess: Great.

Alison Monahan: You know, but, you know, ongoing exercise, meeting new people, sports, you know, sporty things are always good for that kind of stuff.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, for sure. And a lot of you know, even a lot of organizations sometimes will have student rates for things you know, I know that, like, my friends who run a CrossFit gym, they always have a student rate that allows them to qualify for it, so if there's stuff that you're interested in and you're worried about money you should at least learn about it, because oftentimes they'll give a student a break or create a payment plan or something like that so you can still, you know, participate in things.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I know, like, for me, the law school, or the university, had really cheap gym classes that were actually good, so even though I'm laughing about, like, the idea of joining a league, I actually took all kinds of different classes, from belly dancing to squash, and loved all of them, so. Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Alright, what about Bar associations or national organizations like Ms. J.D., do you think these are a good use of your time?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think they can be. Again, you know, like even getting involved in the Bar Association in your local community can be great. It's just a great way to meet lawyers and then also, you know, they have national level involvement. So, you might join, you know, the ABA's like student group or whatever it is, you know, and basically, again, like you can work your way up in that until by the time you're a 3L, maybe you're on the board of that or, you know, Ms J.D., I think, has typically campus chapters, so you can get involved there, and then eventually, I know they have a conference, typically, you know, you go to the conference. Again, like, your school will often pay for these sort of things for you to go to a conference, which can be awesome. So I think just being aware of, like, these opportunities and getting involved with stuff, particularly, you know, after your first year can be really good.

Episode 35: What Extracurricular Activities Matter in Law School

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, with that, I think 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 would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything in the future. If you have any other questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at Lee@LawSchoolToolbox.com or Allison@LawSchoolToolbox.com, or you can always contact us via the website contact form at LawSchoolToolbox.com.

Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.