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For Immediate Release
September 7, 2017

Elms College Student Takes the Fast Track to Law School

Elms College/Western New England University 3+3 program enables students to earn their bachelor's and law degrees in six years instead of seven.

CHICOPEE, Mass. -- Juanita Duvall of Indian Orchard, Mass., won't technically graduate from Elms College until next May, but she's already in law school: The legal studies major is the first student to take advantage of the 3+3 program College of Our Lady of the Elms has executed with Western New England University School of Law.

Under this program, Elms students apply for admission to the law school and begin their legal education during their senior year at Elms College -- which can shorten the time for students to earn both their bachelor's and J.D. degrees from seven years to six.

"The 3+3 program is an amazing opportunity for me," Duvall said. "I am not a traditional student: I am a single mom with one grown child, and one still at home, and I am trying to better my life for myself and for my daughter. This program allows me to finish school one year faster, so that I can devote more time to my daughter. This is important for my career as well, because I will be able to rejoin the workforce sooner."

When she started at Elms three years ago, she was only interested in advancing her career, but her classes inspired her to follow her passion for law.

"At first, I was only interested in learning about the law, getting a paralegal certificate, and doing mediation. Once I got going, however, I was hooked!" Duvall said. "The possibility of going to law school seemed too remote even to consider at first, but with time and encouragement from my advisor, I began to truly believe that it might be possible."

"My favorite things about Elms are the small, personalized classes, and the willingness of the instructors to work with you and to help you succeed. I met so many dedicated and accomplished teachers in my three years there. Elms is truly a wonderful, interactive, well-rounded, learning experience."

After Duvall graduates from law school, she plans to build a career in public service, focusing on civil rights and social justice. "I absolutely live and breathe law! It is truly my life passion -- after my kids, of course."

"Each step of the journey to get to this point was hard work, but so worth it," Duvall added. "Taking the LSAT, waiting, hoping to get accepted: all of it was intense and a little scary, but I made it -- and I would not have made it without the continuing encouragement from all the faculty at Elms."

The program is not limited to criminal justice or legal studies majors -- any undergraduate student, regardless of major, can earn credits toward law school under this program.

“Few ABA-approved law schools give students this option to accelerate their study of law and minimize the time and cost associated with both an undergraduate and legal education,” said Kurt Ward, MBA, J.D., Ph.D., director of criminal justice and legal studies at Elms. “We are privileged to have this relationship with Western New England University's School of Law, and we appreciate their willingness to allow our students the opportunity to continue their legal studies on an accelerated basis.”

For more information on the 3+3 program, visit <http://bit.ly/2vGBifh>.

About Elms College

Elms College is a co-educational Catholic college offering a liberal arts curriculum that gives students multiple perspectives on life. Founded in 1928 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Elms College has a tradition of educating reflective, principled and creative learners, who are rooted in faith, educated in mind, compassionate in heart, responsive to civic and social obligations, and capable of adjusting to change without compromising principle.

About Western New England University

Western New England University is a private coeducational institution founded in 1919, located on a 215-acre suburban campus in Springfield, Massachusetts. Western New England serves 3,955 students, including 2,575 full-time undergraduate students. Western New England offers the academic options of a university and a focus on individualized attention.

[IMAGE]

Juanita Duvall has embarked on her legal career by entering the accelerated program offered by a partnership between Elms College and WNE School of Law. Image courtesy of Elms College.

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