



CHESSA HUFF

Attorney
Food and Drug Administration

FULFILLING A DREAM

From a young age, Chessa Huff's motivation in life has been to help others. Encouraged by a support network of family and friends, nothing—not even a disability—could stand in her way.

"Throughout my life I've always had people tell me that I could do whatever I wanted to do," says Chessa, who is legally blind.

Chessa chose the government because her job allows her to help keep people safe. As an attorney working at the Food and Drug Administration in Silver Spring, MD, she specializes in privacy/compliance law and regulatory policy. She uses her legal training to ensure that the documents that are releasable to the public are compliant with the Freedom of Information Act, the Privacy Act, HIPAA, and other privacy laws.

"I enjoy the challenges—reading a lot, analyzing things ... I love my job," she says with a smile.

FINDING SUPPORT

While an undergraduate, Chessa not only had fears about taking the LSAT, but she had the added responsibility of meeting additional deadlines for visually impaired students.

"When you have a visual disability you have to be a lot more proactive than other people, because you always have to consider the extra steps that have to be taken," she explains.

Thankfully, she found a lot of support through her prelaw fraternity.

"Knowing who to contact was a huge asset—my prelaw fraternity was a lifesaver. They gave me the avenues to get the information I needed," recalls Chessa.

Chessa's ability to overcome challenges was further refined during her law school days. She moved from the south to the north to attend Widener University School of Law in Delaware, and immediately felt the cultural differences between the two regions.

"I questioned whether or not I could relate to my professors and classmates. Would there be a support network for me to lean on?" she wondered.

She did find barriers and challenges at school—a small percentage of her classmates were minorities and she had a huge reality check when she was told 25 percent of her class wouldn't return for their second year.

Chessa knew that wouldn't happen to her. She made the decision to treat law school as a full-time job.

"There is a lot of sacrifice that goes into attending law school," she explains. "It's three years of hard work for your future."

CHESSA'S ADVICE

Chessa challenges students who don't typically visit their professors' offices to go and establish a rapport with them.

"Your professors have a lot of practice and knowledge to share, but if you don't proactively speak to them, they may not necessarily reach out to you—be the one to make the first move."

Looking back on all the effort it took—through tears, anger, and frustrations—it was all part of a growing process for Chessa.

"Regardless of my background, I learned that I was just as worthy as my classmates," she states proudly. "Going to law school was one of the best decisions I made in my life."