

# Passion for crime

## Criminal law concentration prepares students for plethora of roles in justice system

BY CLAIRE HALL

Jason Hollingsworth '07 can speak confidently about fingerprints, hair samples, DNA and why a bullet may have ricocheted during a gunfight, but Hollingsworth didn't major in criminal justice. He is pursuing a career as either a prosecutor or a criminal defense lawyer.

Through the law school's Criminal Law and Advocacy concentration, Hollingsworth was able to supplement traditional law courses with specialty classes he needed to delve into criminal cases.

He eagerly enrolled in Forensic Science and the Law, a course co-taught by Henry Lee, the world-renowned forensic scientist. He also took advantage of an ethics course led by Connecticut Supreme Court justices Joette Katz and Richard Palmer.

"The Criminal Law concentration helped me focus my time in law school," said Hollingsworth, who is studying for the bar and clerking with a criminal law judge in Essex County, N.J. "It really allowed me to do what I wanted to do and get where I wanted to go. It has made my resume stronger and opened doors for me."

Quinnipiac is one of only a handful of universities to offer a criminal law concentration, said Professor Elizabeth Marsh, who heads the program. The concentration attracts up to 17 students each year, including those interested in becoming trial attorneys, prosecutors or judges, working for the FBI, pursuing juvenile justice and teaching.

Marsh worked for seven years in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office before transitioning to academia. "We handled career criminals, homicides and sex crimes," Marsh said. "As sad as it is, crime will always be a growth industry. There is no shortage of cases."

In addition to learning about criminal law—from street crime to federal, white-collar crimes—students are taught criminal procedure, including the constitutional

limitations on the practices of police, prosecutors and the courts.

"They leave knowing if a confession has been acquired properly, how the lineup should be done, and how hearings and motions work to suppress evidence," said Marsh, who has been affiliated with the law school since 1983.

Karen Roberg '06 is working as an assistant states attorney in New Haven. "I apply the knowledge that I gained at Quinnipiac in court almost every day," she said. "The criminal law concentration prepares you really well. Without that background on everything from evidence-gathering to constitutional law to mock trials, you'd be dead in the water. It is a great program. And when you start practicing, you really know what you're doing. You have that experience to fall back on."

"Our graduates are building good names for themselves," said Marsh. She frequently picks up the newspaper and sees one of her former students listed as a prosecutor or defense lawyer. Although most of the criminal law concentration students practice in the tristate area, she has former students throughout the country.

All high-profile cases wind up as part of class discussions—from the O.J. Simpson case to the Fairfield County (Conn.) lawyer who killed his neighbor after believing the man had molested his daughter.

Students interested in the concentration must take an evidence course as a prerequisite. They earn 21 specialty credits; work in one of the courts or accept an externship; and complete a writing requirement.

The criminal law courses cover topics such as interviewing and preparing witnesses, persuasion, trial practice, international criminal law and criminal procedure. The students also graduate well-versed in negotiation and alternative dispute resolution, which is useful in plea bargaining and preventing cases from going to trial unnecessarily.



Jason Hollingsworth '07 and Kelley Anthes '07 with Professor Elizabeth Marsh, director of the criminal law concentration.

Another advantage of enrolling in the concentration is the opportunity to participate in mock trials. Quinnipiac's students and the American Bar Association sponsor a national legal competition, the Criminal Justice Trial Advocacy Competition, each fall at the Federal District Courthouse in New Haven.

As a result, the law school has developed strong ties with both prosecutors and defense attorneys, Marsh said. "Our students have gained respect in the community and built our reputation for excellence, enthusiasm and 'fire in the belly.' They care very much, regardless of what side they take," Marsh said. "We're very proud of our students who are out practicing in the criminal law area."

Kelley Anthes '07, took concentrations in both family law and criminal law, after realizing how often a domestic dispute turns into a criminal matter. She was leaning toward becoming a prosecutor, so when she was offered an externship in the Juvenile Public Defenders Office in Waterbury, Conn., she wasn't sure it would suit her.

But she listened to Marsh's advice that if a lawyer wants to work on one side of the law, he or she must understand and appreciate the other side as well. "It really helped me see things from different angles and perspectives," Anthes said. "Sure, some of the juvenile defendants I met had done terrible things, but they

often came from broken homes, extreme poverty and violent neighborhoods, all of which factored into their behavior.

"I have always been a proponent for rehabilitation, no matter which side—prosecution or defense—I have worked for. The defense side helped me see deeper into how to provide the help the clients need."

Anthes is now completing a judicial clerkship in family court in Monmouth County, N.J.

"This career is very emotionally taxing," Anthes said. "You have to be on your toes, and it is stressful. You don't want to go to bed at night knowing someone dangerous was let back into the community because you didn't do a good job, or that an innocent person was convicted because you didn't make your case. Everything you do affects people's lives."

Hollingsworth, who is leaning toward criminal defense, agrees. "I like the idea of helping people who find themselves in a situation that they never thought they would be in. Dealing with taxes or corporate entities, there's no emotion," he said. "Here people have a stake in the proceedings. Their lives hang in the balance. I think it is the ability to work with people and the law that intrigues me the most."