

John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Leondra Tyler:

I'm taking advantage of all of what the Syracuse University has to offer, that I am making a mark on this campus. I'm making it a better campus for the next round of students that are coming in and that I'm an example for future students to also take similar choices and make similar impact in different ways.

It's been such an amazing journey and it's very sad to me that it's almost over, but I know that Syracuse will always be my home. I'm from the area. I know that there will always be people on campus that will love me from afar no matter where I go. And no matter where I go, I know I can always come back to campus. So even though my time here is almost done, it's really never over.

John Boccacino:

The Syracuse University community is preparing to honor its graduates from the class of 2024 during this upcoming commencement weekend. And on this week's episode of the 'Cuse Conversations podcast, I am pleased to welcome on Leondra Tyler from the class of 2024. Leondra is a non-traditional student who will graduate with degrees in both neuroscience and psychology here at Syracuse University's College of Arts and Sciences and College of Professional Studies through the Part-Time Higher Education Opportunity Program. Leondra has a fascinating story to share with our podcast audience. She's a frequent flyer on the Dean's list. She's been recognized as a McNair Scholar, an Our Time Has Come Scholar and a Remembrance Scholar, and she's also had some pretty impactful educational experiences through Syracuse abroad studying in South Korea. Her goals once she graduates are to become a doctor one day. Leondra, it's a pleasure to have you on. Thanks for making the time to join us.

Leondra Tyler:

Thank you. Good morning.

John Boccacino:

Good morning. Your story is remarkable, and I know a lot of community members have been following along with this path to your two degrees here at Syracuse. How would you sum up your journey to this point?

Leondra Tyler:

If I could sum it up in one word, transformative. I learned a lot about myself during my journey here at Syracuse, and I can definitely say I'm not the same person that I was in 2018 when I first started here. Syracuse University has given me the resources to not only succeed academically, but to learn a lot about myself and my values and my morals and whatnot.

John Boccacino:

What was that thought process that led you to wanting to go back to get the degree?

Leondra Tyler:

I've always been really ambitious and motivated with education. When I was growing up, my mom, but always drove me to the library. So when I made the hard decision to drop out of high school, I always had this vision of attending Syracuse University originally for journalism, but I also had to let go of that dream of attending university. I'm from the area, so I grew up in Cicero, New York, and I went to Boces

to get the new name for the GED. So essentially I got my GED at Boces in Liverpool. And while I was there about to take my test, one of the instructors told me about the HEOP program and where I would be able to attend Syracuse University even though I hadn't graduated from high school. So I just opened up the possibility for me to attend university and now I'm here.

John Boccacino:

Do you mind sharing a little bit about what happened with your decision to drop out of high school and then what led you to go back and say, I really feel now is the right time to fulfill those academic dreams?

Leondra Tyler:

So growing up I was in a predominantly white school and I dealt with bullying, but also a lot of racism and really impacted my mental health. So I decided to drop out of high school because it was just too much for me. And I think I was around 20 or 21 where I'm like, I need a job and you need at least a GED to get some sort of at least clerical job. At the time, I was working at Driver's Village. My friend got me that job, thank goodness. And I decided to attend classes at Boces. And I didn't even think of at that time about SU, about possibly going to college. I was just like, I need to be able to feed myself. I need to be able to have some sort of job. And it was a time where I was really struggling. And then when the instructor told me about Syracuse University, it just opened my mind to all the possibilities of who I can be and what I can become. And I'm really glad that they told me about the HEOP program because otherwise I would not be the person that I am right now without that.

John Boccacino:

How exactly did HEOP and the College of Professional Studies help you in making that transition?

Leondra Tyler:

Oh, oh my gosh. I feel very grateful for having my experience in college as a part-time student one, but also as an HEOP student because it seems more of like a one-on-one advising experience. My advisor, Marsha Senior is amazing. I feel very comfortable coming to her with any issues or questions that I have. So that definitely made me feel a lot comfortable. And I wasn't just close with my advisor, but everyone in the office. It was a great relief that I did not have to pay for my education because I didn't have the money for it. So going into the HEOP program knowing that I won't have to worry about a lot of loans or any financial issues and all I have to do is just focus on myself and school was just a huge relief. And then from there, we started off with summer remedial courses, which was great because when I started off at Syracuse it had been about eight years since I've been in a classroom setting and it's a huge shift from high school into college. So the remedial math courses and writing courses were a great introductory start to get me used to attending college.

John Boccacino:

What are some other challenges that face our nontraditional students on the path to a college degree?

Leondra Tyler:

A lot of nontraditional students are typically adults. So they have kids, they could have health issues. We're also typically commuter students, so there's that aspect of transporting to campus as well. I'm lucky where I live downtown, so I'm still near campus, but transportation's often a big barrier for nontraditional students as well. And then honestly just fitting in socially on campus. Especially in my first two years here, I felt a little disconnect for me in campus, even though I'm taking the same classes and I know in the end I'll obtain the same degree. Just knowing that one, I'm older and that I took a different path just made me feel different on campus. And I didn't really have a community because I didn't make the effort to find

my place on campus. But once I did find a community and be involved more on campus, I felt a lot more part more of the community.

John Boccacino:

Go into a little more detail on that line of thought. How did you go about finding your community and what are some of the organizations that you're most proud of that you've been able to participate and contribute to?

Leondra Tyler:

So I would always go to the involvement fair on campus, which there's so many RSOs on campus, which is great. But I wanted something a little bit different. So my first organization that I say that I really love that I got involved with would be the Hendricks Chapel Food Pantry, which isn't technically an organization, but I definitely found a lot of community through the work that I do there. And then I'm also involved in the, Our Time Has Come Scholar program, which also has connected me with a lot of amazing and talented students that I'm so proud to call my friends. And then I'm also in the McNair Scholar program as well, which just like OTHC connected with a lot of smart, academically driven people, and I've met so many of my friends throughout these Scholar programs and while working in the food pantry.

John Boccacino:

Give us a little more insights into your role with the food pantry and how you've been helping out with food insecurity issues.

Leondra Tyler:

Something that's really passionate for me, I love food in all aspects. I love to cook, I love to be able to build community through food and the baseline of being able to have a community over food is making sure that everyone has access to food. So at the start of the pandemic in 2020, I was looking for work on campus over the summer. I had reached out to the formal director of the food services on campus, and they connected me with Syeisha Byrd who oversaw the food Pantry at Hendricks Chapel at the time. And I started working on our south campus location over the summer and I met a lot of great students who really needed the food. Because it was the pandemic they didn't have jobs, they were stuck on campus. It was just a very pivotal moment for everyone. It resonated with me that this is something that I wanted to continue doing. So about a year later, I moved to the main food pantry locations inside of Hendricks Chapel, and now it's been about four years almost since I've been involved in the food pantry. I'm the student coordinator for the food pantry and it has grown so much. We've been able to help so many students from about 10 students a week all the way to about a hundred to 150 a week, which is amazing how the impact of the food pantry has really helped students on this campus.

John Boccacino:

It's impressive. Dean's List, McNair Scholar, Our Time Has Come Scholar and Remembrance Scholar amongst the many accolades of your decorated academic career. What important role did those scholarships and did that recognition play for you in reaching your dreams?

Leondra Tyler:

I still have this issue, but I've always had imposter syndrome where I'm just constantly questioning, do I belong here? Should I be getting this award? Is there somebody better that they just overlooked maybe? And being in these programs have definitely built my self-esteem and my self-confidence. I've always known that I've been a smart person and I'm kind and I love helping people, but being a part of these

communities have instilled this foundation of just knowing that I belong here, that I'm going to do amazing things and it's just nice.

John Boccacino:

So connect the dots for us a little bit with your academic pursuits. Again, we mentioned getting neuroscience and psychology as your degrees. What was the thought process and where did your passion for these fields come from?

Leondra Tyler:

Dealing with my own mental health issues and depression from the bullying in school, I developed a passion for psychology. So then I decided to attend Syracuse University majoring in psychology. And then the way that the HEOP program works is that for part-time, at least you have to start off with an associates in liberal arts. So through my liberal arts requirements I took introductory biology 121 and 122. And my instructor had mentioned how great I was doing in class. I was getting an A. She's like, "What's your major?" And I'm like, "I'm psychology." And she told me like, "Oh, you should look into neuroscience. You do amazing in biology, and you can pair that with the integrated learning major." I took an introductory to neuroscience with Dr. Robin Jones, and I fell in love with it. She made neuroscience very easy and very exciting for me. I absolutely love her. She's an amazing instructor. And then I decided to take introductory to cognitive neuroscience also with Dr. Jones. And then after that I was like, yeah, I'm declaring neuroscience.

John Boccacino:

Did you have to go through any soul-searching to overcome ... I don't know, having to deal with the fact that it's okay to work on yourself, it's okay to admit that there might be a problem with your mental health?

Leondra Tyler:

Yeah. That's definitely something that we're still working on in the black community. There's a stigmatization around mental health. And I feel like it got a lot better for me in my adulthood because I was able to make my own choices when it came to healthcare. And I was very proactive about prioritizing myself, seeing a therapist. Which I believe everyone should have a therapist rather than you feel like you have issues or not. It's always great to have a third party unbiased opinion with anything that you have. And it's been very transformative for me to put myself first.

John Boccacino:

What else would you say to students who might be dealing with the same mental health issues you were encountering?

Leondra Tyler:

So for me, I've always sought academic validation. So I tend to do more than I can handle. So the thing that's been a big issue lately has been burnout for a lot of people. My advice would be it's okay to say no to things. You may want to take every opportunity that comes your way, which is great that you're getting those opportunities, but you also got to think of, I constantly doing everything, how is this going to affect you later on in life? So I would recommend that you take time for yourself. It's really hard, especially in college. But just taking time for yourself. I personally have a self-care day once a week where I literally just don't do anything. I don't do any work, I don't do any assignments, and that has been great for me. There's a lot of resources on campus in Barnes like the MindSpa room. Even if you take 30 minutes just

to be in there and reflect. There's mindfulness classes. I definitely recommend reaching out for those resources.

John Boccacino:

I'd love you to talk to us a little bit about your study abroad experience and how transformative it was for you to go and study it in South Korea at Yonsei University.

Leondra Tyler:

Oh my gosh, that was such an amazing experience that I'm actually going again for a Maymester class and I'm very grateful for the second experience to be able to go. South Korea is such a beautiful country. Seoul, it's a city, but it's just carved by all these different mountains. Oh my God, it's such an amazing experience. And the way that the abroad program was set up is that it's direct enroll. So I was an international student at that campus at Yonsei University. So there were other abroad students from all over the world. So I didn't just experience Korean culture, but I got to mingle and get to know people from all over the world .from Australia, Germany, from New Zealand. I was not expecting to be able to meet other people from other countries beyond South Korea, but it was very transformative.

I gained a lot of independence. I learned that I really loved to travel. I was able to take a lot more time for myself and be reflective. And coming back I decided to slow down a little bit. But I love South Korea and I definitely encourage people to study abroad if they are able to. Just being able to learn about other cultures, being able to put yourself in a position where you're uncomfortable but in a safe way because obviously there's a lot of language barriers. I did take Korean 101 before going abroad, so I knew the basics like any traveler should know. Like ask directions, how to order food and whatnot. But it was very transformative to be able to learn from a different culture that's vastly different from Western and American culture

John Boccacino:

When it comes to the academic side of things, what are some other ways that your career ambitions have been influenced by your time on campus?

Leondra Tyler:

So I've been able to engage in a lot of research on campus, which I love. I've always been the type of person to ask a lot of questions. I've always been very inquisitive, so it made sense being reflective and looking back that I would be involved in not only stem, but also research. I've always been the type of person to ask questions and try to figure out the answers.

I believe it was fall 2019, I started being a research assistant and a social psychology lab and I bounced between a few labs. And then my main intentions was just to get research experience. And then I joined the PRIDE program, which has a new name now, but it's a REU, a research experience program through the Syracuse University Psychology department. I believe it was eight weeks and I was paired with a research mentor Dr. Sara Burke, and I was able to be exposed to conducting research over the summer. We created our own research projects. We started those projects. We learned about analyzing data. We also looked into applying to grad school and information about navigating grad school, especially as people of color. So it was a great experience. Really just reaffirmed my interest in research. And now I'm continuing to work with Dr. Burke and I'm doing social psychology based research. And then I also joined McNair, which is a research scholar program. And then also I'm conducting research for Dr. Andrew Craig at Upstate Medical University.

John Boccacino:

What are you planning on doing with your degree to utilize it once you graduate to make a difference in your community?

Leondra Tyler:

I want to take a gap year. So this fall I'm going to start applying to PhD programs. I want to be a doctor. And I'm looking at social psychology, but also neuroscience programs. I'm looking to just being able to continue conducting research. My main interest is conducting social psychology research, but I really want to implement neuroimaging into my research. I'm really interested in biases. In general I've always just been interested in social behavior and why people do the things that they do. I've been interested in public policy since my work in the food pantry. So one of my top programs is at Georgetown and they have a PhD program in social psychology where you can also get a master's in public policy, which I'm hoping will be allow me to be able to conduct research throughout my PhD. But then also once I'm in the career field, being able to help facilitate policies within the health sphere of mental health to help people.

John Boccacino:

Is there what you would call a dream job for you in that world of social psychology and biases and the way we interpret and conduct ourselves/ what would you say is a dream occupation in the doctoral field?

Leondra Tyler:

I would love to work for the NIH or some government health department being able to navigate different laws and ethics around psychology and also neuroscience, because neuroscience is a very emerging field.

John Boccacino:

You were selected as the inaugural outstanding future alum during the recent Syracuse University alumni award celebrations. What a cool honor that was. What did it mean to you to be selected and to get to receive that designation?

Leondra Tyler:

It meant a lot. It was so great to be able to be at the awards ceremony and just see everyone gather to celebrate orange excellence. And it's really special to me to know that I'm the university's ideal students, that I'm taking advantage of all of what the Syracuse University has to offer, that I am making a mark on this campus. I'm making it a better campus for the next round of students that are coming in and that I'm an example for future students to also take similar choices and make similar impact in different ways.

John Boccacino:

What is it going to be like and what is it going to mean for you when you officially get to go across, hear your name called, and to be a member of the class of 2024?

Leondra Tyler:

I'm going to cry. It's been such a long and rewarding journey. And as me being part-time, it's taken me six years to get here, but it's been such an amazing journey and it's very saddening to me that it's almost over. But I know that Syracuse will always be my home. I'm from the area. I know that there will always be people on campus that will love me from afar no matter where I go. And no matter where I go, I know I can always come back to campus. So even though my time here is almost done, it's really never over.

John Boccacino:

Leondra, it has really been a pleasure getting to meet you here on the podcast and tell your story. Best of luck and just relish every moment of commencement weekend. You've earned this.

Leondra Tyler:

Thank you so much John.

Omnia Shedid:

Being at the College of Law has taught me how to lead with understanding. There's leadership with example, and then there's leadership with understanding. And I think with understanding it is such a beautiful way to tie up my entire experience because my law classes have taught me how to understand not just the law, but other people's perspective on the law. How law is written. It's important to understand where people are coming from and what they need because that's your way to respond to that. And I think that is a strategy and a lesson that I definitely learned at the College of Law because you can't really support people unless you actually know what it is that they need.

John Boccacino:

Our guest today on the 'Cuse Conversations podcast is Omnia Shedid. The president of the College of Law's class of 2024. Shedid is an outstanding student leader and an accomplished researcher at the intersection of law and policy. Now, she grew up in a rural village in Egypt, but her family immigrated to the states when Omnia was six years old. And now Shedid is set to graduate and embark on a law career centered on helping those less fortunate. We will talk in a little bit about the dream job she has landed upon graduating from our college of law. Omnia, thank you for making the time to join us today.

Omnia Shedid:

Thank you for having me, John. I'm very excited to be here today and to share my story and as much advice as I possibly can to other students.

John Boccacino:

How would you summarize your journey from growing up in that small rural village in Egypt to now you're the president of the College of Law's class of 2024? It's pretty surreal.

Omnia Shedid:

It is incredibly surreal when I think about it and reflect on times when I would be on my family's farm. I would be chasing the chickens. I would be running through the cornfields and the fava bean trees. And there were times when I would help my grandmother wash our dishes and our clothes in the river in front of our house. I never would have imagined that life would take me, one the United States, but also just to college and then to law school. And I am so fortunate to be living my dream and to have accomplished so much. But the journey has been ... I'm not going to lie, it's been rough. There have been so many moments where I doubted myself and the light at the end of the tunnel, but I kept pushing it every moment where I felt like I was going to give up and I'm so glad I had the foresight and the energy to do that because I'm so proud to have come this far.

John Boccacino:

How did your mom, seeing what she was going through of both working full-time to give you a better opportunity and a chance at the lifestyle and the dreams that all parents have for their children, how did your mother's hard work really inspire you?

Omnia Shedid:

My mother is a phenomenal woman, and I think her work inspired me because she just took every challenge that came her way with grace. It's not easy to, again, learn a different language, raise three kids, and with just very minimal support. And I grew up in Baltimore and the Egyptian community there, there's the community there, but it's not as big as other places in the country so it just felt very isolating at times. And my mother tried her best to ... I saw her work really long hours to raise us. There were days when she had to go complete certain paperwork at the social services office or try to get us the help and the resources we need again without really understanding how the American systems work or how any systems in the country work. But she also taught us that in any time of need, and when you get through that time of need, you experience it, you feel everything that you need to feel in those times, but when you get through them, you have to, one, be grateful and thankful that you got through them, but also help people who are in the same position. And I think that instilled in me a lot of the feelings that I have for ensuring that other people feel supported with whatever hardship or adversity they may be feeling.

John Boccacino:

Coming to Syracuse to earn these dual degrees in both public administration and law. What exactly was it about our academic offerings that really resonated with you when it came to choosing your career path of coming to Syracuse?

Omnia Shedid:

Syracuse is one of the most incredible places I've ever been. Both the city ... It's such a beautiful community and university has a beautiful community. But I knew that it was at the forefront of a lot of academic areas, and particularly the College of Law has very strong research, but also incredible professors. And when I was doing my research about different law schools, I was very particular about understanding what kind of professors the law schools had. And it proved correct because they're some of the most incredible intelligent people I've ever worked with. And it mattered a lot to me that we had a very community-oriented and helpful student base. I reached out to alumni when I was deciding on where I wanted to go to law school, and I asked them about the student organizations, if the professors were receptive to their needs when they needed something, if they were collaborative. And every single person said it was a collegial environment that really intellectually stimulated you. And I knew I wanted to be intellectually challenged in that way. Not just to what I wanted to learn, but to go outside of the box.

And Syracuse has also demonstrated that in the sense that there are certain law school classes, for example, constitutional law with Professor Anand that really stretch your mental capacity to understand law, but also to understand other people's opinions about the law. And I knew from even from my time at community college that I wanted to go somewhere that was respectful of understanding people's different opinions about the law and about the way that law is created, changed, policy is generated. And I think that that was a huge factor in me coming to Syracuse.

John Boccacino:

How are you going to use the law degree and your degree in public administration to really battle for making a difference and helping those who are less fortunate?

Omnia Shedid:

At its core, being a lawyer is being of service to people. And if you think about it, it doesn't matter who you're representing as an attorney or a lawyer, you are supporting that person. It could be a corporation, it could be an individual, but at the end of the day, you are being of service to someone else. But to me, how I plan to do it is if I can make just one person's life better, especially if it's someone that's gone through something similar to what I went through, then I can comfortably say that I did my part. I want to be



among the people that help members of Congress or just are leaders. Ensure that they are creating laws and policies that are reflective of the people that they govern, that are responsive to people. And I want to ensure that people of all backgrounds of all means have the resources that they need to succeed and are aware to be able to advocate for themselves to get those resources. So it's about empowering people, and I plan on hopefully doing that throughout my entire career. So it's understanding people's needs, advocating for people's needs, and ensuring that they feel empowered and know their rights and their own ability to ask for help when they need it.

John Boccacino:

What are some of the ways your time on campus and the activities and clubs you've been involved with, how has that really helped to mold and influence your career ambitions?

Omnia Shedid:

Being at the College of Law has taught me how to lead with understanding. There's leadership with example, and then there's leadership with understanding. And I think with understanding it is such a beautiful way to tie up my entire experience because my law classes have taught me how to understand not just the law, but other people's perspective on the law. How law is written. But also as class president. Even as class president, as a part of the Veterans Legal Clinic, as a volunteer for pro bono hours that deal with the Afghan refugees that may have come to Syracuse, it's important to understand where people are coming from and what they need because that's your way to respond to that. And I think that is a strategy and a lesson that I definitely learned at the College of Law because you can't really support people unless you actually know what it is that they need. I credit a lot of my understanding and just ability to try to be more collaborative in the legal field and in my career generally with these internships, because working collaboratively, it just goes such a long way to create a little bit more harmony and collaboration within the space that you're in. And the college of law really has fostered that. And that's a lesson that I will be taking on for the rest of my career.

John Boccacino:

And the fact that you have such great, again, hands-on experiences. The Betty and Michael D. Wohl Veterans Legal Clinic providing basically pro bono advice and counsel. Can you give a little insights into how beneficial that experience was to work with our veterans providing those legal resources?

Omnia Shedid:

So the Veterans Legal Clinic is important because it has allowed me to make an impact in other people's lives. And not a lot of law school students have that opportunity throughout law school. Again, because we're so consumed with our classes that sometimes we might not have the ability to do an internship, an externship or clinic. But that clinic allowed me to one, not only serve the community, but serve veterans who needed a lot of support. But also work with other law students and an incredible professor, Professor Kubala, who runs the Veterans Legal Clinic in advocating for veteran rights.

John Boccacino:

Your passion is authentic and genuine for really making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. I'd love for you to provide a little background into this dream job that you are going to be embarking on once you graduate as an honors attorney with the government. What is this position going to entail and why is this really a great dream job for you?

Omnia Shedid:

When people ask me what form of advice would you give people, one of the main things I tell them is make a plan and keep that plan flexible. So when I got to my second summer internship, first of all, I didn't even want to end up at my second summer internship because I didn't want to be at my first summer internship. Not because I didn't think that the job was incredible, it was. Both of them were incredible opportunities. But I think I was so scared to get out of my comfort zone because both jobs were in Providence, Rhode Island. And I was so scared to go beyond Washington DC or Baltimore, the places that I was really familiar with.

But my first summer job took me to Providence Rhode Island, and it was one of the best experiences of my life at the Attorney General of Rhode Island. And I was a Clifton clerk there. Incredible. And I remember working incredibly hard. I, again, really enjoyed that job. But I knew from then I wanted to clerk. And I ended up going to a federal court the second summer. And this is important to the story of my dream job because at the federal court, they have these learning lunch sessions where they bring in people from all different parts of the government to talk to you about their careers and basically try to open your mind to the wonderful possibilities of working for the government. And I knew early on I wanted to make a difference and that difference meant to work in the government. I think that was set.

But then there was a gentleman that came in from this particular government agency and he talked about his job and he did it with so much passion and so much respect for the people that he interacted with that were impacted by this particular issue. And my family and I had experienced this particular issue, and it dawned on me that it was like a calling. This is something that I needed to be a part of, and that this was a system that I wanted to help ensure was navigated fairly and in a way that again, best supported the government entity working to ensure its integrity, but also serve the people that came through this particular system. So I applied for the job, and again, it was my dream job. I didn't know how to pinpoint that it was my dream job until I met and heard this gentleman speak.

But I would say it's my dream job because one, it allows me to support people going through something that I went through and my family went through. But two, it is again, helping ensure that just one system, even if it's a tiny part of the many systems that are happening within the US government or are in the US government, is a system of integrity, of support, and of one that is of service to the people, but also to the law. And I think that it allows me balance my love of law and my love of helping people and ensuring that both the law is respected and the people are respected during such a difficult time that they go through. So that is one thing. But more than that, it allows me ... And I'm very excited about this. But it allows me to go back to Baltimore and not to say ... I love my city, but more than that, it helps me and allows me support the people of Baltimore, my community. That community raised me. I want to be able to go back and help my community.

John Boccacino:

There's other students, I'm sure who are in your shoes who might be facing some of the same challenges you had to deal with. What advice would you provide to them to maybe help them navigate their journeys?

Omnia Shedid:

Something that I would've loved to hear or I wish I would've heard, and I wish I would've ingrained into myself is do not say no until no is said to you. So don't say no to yourself until no is said to you because there are so many opportunities out there. Had I accepted no for an answer and had I accepted that I said to myself, I said to myself, no, I would've never gotten ... And one other thing that I would like, students who overcame similar challenges is resilience is a muscle. Every adversity that we face is a chance for us to build that muscle and to tell ourselves that you can keep going. You can put in the effort to accomplish the goal that you set for yourself. And I think with that comes my other piece of advice, which is your work is your currency.

Hard work matters a lot. And sometimes you're not going to get the grades that you want. First semester of law school, I didn't do nearly as well as I would've hoped. But again, I knew that my hard work could get me to where I would've liked to be. And I had to make my plan flexible to the work that I was going to put in. And within that hard work, I think that just as much as your hard work is your currency, the way that you treat people is your currency. The way that you make people come together. The way that you understand people. The way that you mediate between people. And when I think about something that Syracuse College of Law has given me, I really think about the opportunities that I've had to mediate between my fellow students and I think it's something that's going to serve me really well in my career. But more than that, I'm just lucky to have been able to ... Even if it's just one student, one student, to bring people together during tough times. I think that's very important.

So I want people to know that times will get challenging, especially for students. Times will get challenging. Classes will get incredibly hard. There will be internships. There will be internships that say, no, you can't. We regret to inform you that you didn't get this internship. We regret to inform you that you didn't get this job opportunity. But if I had gotten discouraged after every single no that I've heard, I wouldn't be with you today. I wouldn't have gotten my dream job. Every, no, I think should turn into a way that you work 10 times harder because when one door closes, I swear to you, so many other doors will open for you and you just have to keep turning the knob.

John Boccacino:

To have Syracuse University on your degree, being an alumna of both the College of Law and the Maxwell School with your dual degrees here, how special is that going to be to know that once you cross the stage, you get that diploma? You are officially one of more than 250,000 living alumni in the orange Network?

Omnia Shedid:

Syracuse has allowed me to really not only know more about myself, but myself as the attorney that I hope to be. It has forced me to understand for myself and to encourage others that there's so much going on in the world right now, too much for us to be ignorant. And it has challenged me academically, personally. And to be a part of that, to be able to say that this is what Syracuse University taught me, and to be a part of their alumni, to be a part of their network is something so special. And I never thought that I would reach it. And to have ended up here is such a dream come true. And it's so crazy. It's weird. You come into contact with things that I think are inherently meant for you very early on before you even reach that stage. And I think I'd always had such a soft spot for Syracuse University because of its academic reputation, because of its athletic reputation, because of just the amount of people that get to have the privilege of saying I'm part of the orange community, and I cannot believe that years later I am now a part of that community and could say to other people that you can also be a part of that community. So I'm so excited. I feel very privileged, very honored, and I know that it will help me others.

John Boccacino:

Well, we know you're going to make us all proud to watch you really blaze a path and blaze a trail. As again, an honors attorney and someone who is combining her passion and love for law with making a difference for those who are less fortunate in our societies. It has been a real thrill to have Omnia Shedid here on the podcast. Best of luck with your legal career, and thank you for making the time today.

Omnia Shedid:

Thank you so much, John. I really appreciate it.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.