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## Adam Zwetchkenbaum: Meaningful Work

A few short years ago, Adam Zwetchkenbaum was feeling compelled to pivot.

He was in his early thirties, a 2008 graduate of Framingham State with a degree in psychology and a career in management. He found himself unsatisfied with a job born of a need to simply pay the bills – a practical necessity but unfulfilling work. It was taking its toll.

"The profit motive wasn't meaningful," Adam said. "I wanted my day-to-day work to be meaningful to me, and for me that means bringing about positive change in the lives of others in a very real way."

With a former interest in social work being supplanted by what he considered the more decisive nature of legal action, he turned his attention to law school. "That's something I'm drawn to," he said, "the ability to complete tasks and say that this has been done."

Now 35 and 11 years married, Adam is a second-year student at the University of Massachusetts Law School, and he believes he's found that elusive path toward meaningful work. His Rappaport Fellowship landed him with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, where part of the job was devoted to the Department's Equity Agenda, a strategic initiative to help underrepresented students gain access to – and achieve positive outcomes in – higher education.

"It was an incredibly rewarding experience," he said.

Specifically, Adam drafted a memo that targeted three goals: 1. establish youth in the custody of the state as a single classification; 2. establish this particular class as underrepresented in higher education ("not a very contentious assertion," he said); and 3. recommend research that would create effective strategic initiatives to improve access and educational outcomes for this group.

The results? Adam is managing expectations while hopeful for traction. "There's always a higher priority, always a reason not to do something," he said. "The thing about this particular population is that there's no one really huddling up for them and making sure things are taken care of."

He wants to continue like-minded work well into the future. Adam envisions a future law practice that includes legal counsel for those who can't afford it, initiatives-based research projects, as well as an educational component around finances and legal rights.

"I would love to be able to help everyone, but I can't," he said, "so I want to give others the tools to be effective advocates for themselves and those around them."

Just as he was given the tools, through the Rappaport Fellowship, this summer.

"This program has given me insight and access to things I don't believe I ever would have had otherwise," he said. "I have learned more than I could have possibly ever wanted. There are a lot of people who want to do good work, but they don't have the networks to help get it done."

"This program does that."



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