

'Cuse Conversations Episode 133: Law Student Brianna Sclafani Highlights the Work of the Community Review Board (Transcript)

Jen Maser:

I'm Jen Maser, Associate Director of Internal Communications at Syracuse University, and you're listening to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.

[Episode Snippet]

Brianna Sclafani:

The first mandate is our most public-facing mandate, it's the major one, is to review appeals of civilian disposition. What that means is a member of the university community can file a complaint with the Department of Public Safety, Department of Public Safety fully investigates that complaint, and gives the university member a final disposition. Once they receive that final disposition, if they're unhappy with the outcome, then they can appeal that disposition to the board. That is our major mandate. That is one of the three mandates that we got from the Loretta Lynch report from a few years ago on the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, she also chairs the university's inaugural Community Review Board, an independent entity that provides oversight of certain functions of the Department of Public Safety, which we'll get into more later in the conversation. Brianna, thanks for taking time out of your day to chat with me. How are you doing today?

Brianna Sclafani:

I'm good, Jen. Thanks for having me. I'm excited.

Jen Maser:

We're excited to have you. I thought we could start going back to the beginning about who you are as a person and what your life trajectory has been like leading you up to your current role as a Syracuse law student and a student in Maxwell. Can you tell me what you were interested about growing up? What was your educational trajectory like and what led you to pursuing enrollment in law school?

Brianna Sclafani:

through the process of earning your degree or that you hope to specialize in after graduation?

Brianna Sclafani:

I don't think there's a particular area of the law that I'm most interested in, but what I am interested in and what being a lawyer means to me is serving the community. It means giving back. No matter what area I practice in, I know that I will be well -equipped with my law degree from Syracuse and also my public administration degree from Maxwell that I'll be best prepared to handle all any sort of legal or policy issue that comes my way because of the experience here.

Jen Maser:

Jen Maser:

Your parents will probably be very happy come May with two commencements coming up.

Brianna Sclafani:

Very happy that they have two daughters graduating, but also that they have to make the four-hour trip from Connecticut to come see us back to back, but they're proud.

Jen Maser:

Yes. Oh, yeah. Didn't think about that. Good, I'm glad to hear that. Honing in specif

Thank you for that very thorough background explanation. I think it'll be helpful for people to wrap their brain about what this board is and what it's meant to do. Can

Now, in its second year, we've been able to actually fulfill some of our mandates. Again, our most recent example of this is providing DPS with some recommended policies. The way that that process works and will work hopefully in the future is that DPS has some changes or revisions that it wants to make to its policies and procedures. Because those certain policies and procedures deal with the

Jen Maser:

Are there any surprises or misconceptions about the work of the CRB that you've encountered so far over the last year and a half that you've been involved?

Brianna Sclafani:

I think the main misconception is a general lack of awareness. The CRB is in its second year. It's very new. I've even had conversations with my fellow law students that have no idea that this entity exists, this entity working to represent them, and making sure that all students' voices are heard. I think we're obviously still working on that. It is in its second year, so we've spent a majority of our time propping up the CRB, making sure that it has a lasting legacy, and it will be successful after this first and second year's board members leave, so again, misconception, or just unaware that this entity exists not only for appeals purposes, but also just exists to address community issues as they relate to the Department of Public Safety.

Jen Maser:

Yeah, and I think it's important for people to understand, too, like you've been saying, that this is a representation of our student body, of our faculty, and staff members, so it's not even this abstract organization entity that exists somewhere on the campus, it's actually like this represents you, and you should be keyed into what they're doing, and stay involved, and pay attention to what's going on because it's speaking for the entire student body in terms of these very specific issues.

Brianna Sclafani:

Exactly.

Jen Maser:

My last question for you is just, how do you feel like you've been able to make a difference through this work with the Community Review Board, specifically?

Brianna Sclafani:

I think for me personally, any impact is an impact, and so as I've mentioned, being a part of every community, whether it's from Sandy Hook, to Virginia Tech, to now Syracuse, just one positive moment means the world to me. The most impact that I felt I have had and that the CRB has had together was the arrest-in-classroom policy. We had a great conversation with Chief Stone and we had great public participation a couple of weeks ago. All the work that we did last year, building up the CRB to address these critical policy questions I felt came to ahead a couple of weeks ago. We were able to fully institute that mandate and I was really happy to be a part of really critical conversations because it's not an easy issue. It won't be solved right away, but we're really happy to be a part of these critical conversations that are occurring on campus and also across the nation.

Jen Maser:

Thank you so much, Brianna, for joining us today on 'Cuse Conversations. I really appreciate your time and I hope everyone takes the opportunity to get involved in the CRB and its upcoming work.

Brianna Sclafani:

Thank you. It was great to be here.

Jen Maser:

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