

Alexis Robertso...: Welcome to The Path and The Practice, a podcast dedicated to sharing the professional origin stories of the attorneys at Foley & Lardner LLP. A full serviced law firm with over 1000 lawyers across the US and abroad. I'm your host, Alexis Robertson, director of diversity and inclusion at Foley. In each episode of this podcast, you'll hear me in conversation with a different Foley attorney. You'll learn about each guest's unique background, path to law school and path to Foley & Lardner. Essentially, you'll hear the stories you won't find on their professional bios. And of course, you'll learn a bit about their practice. Now let's get to the episode.

This episode features a conversation with Yesenia Soria. Yesenia just finished her time as a summer associate in Foley's Dallas office. So, I brought her on to speak about that, but because this is The Path and The Practice, we first have to talk about her path leading to law, and then to Foley & Lardner. So, the conversation starts off with Yesenia, reflecting on growing up in Pampa, Texas, attending Abilene Christian University for undergrad in Texas Tech University, where she's a rising three L in the JD/MBA program. Additionally, Yesenia reflects on her experience being a first generation college student and what she did in order to find a college that was the best fit for her. She then talks about why it was she decided to go to law school and what it was like adjusting to law school, as well as her decision to also earn her MBA.

We then segue into Yesenia's experience interviewing with law firms for summer associate positions. And she talks about exactly what it was about Foley & Lardner that appealed or such that she chose us. Along the way throughout our discussion, Yesenia provides a lot of fantastic advice and insight, and also digs in a bit about what she did this summer, what she worked on, how she got assignments and just how she found the overall experience to be. Also, I should note at the time that we recorded this episode, Yesenia had not yet signed and returned her offer letter to Foley, but it's my understanding that she since has, although she will not be joining the firm until after she completes a clerkship.

Also, if you enjoy this conversation with Yesenia and would like to hear from other Foley summer associates, check out that two episodes before this with Allison Zweng and with Savannah Levin. As well as episode 50, which is with Doug Lightfoot, and episode 23 with Nick Benson. Those are all summers who have spent time with Foley and who are brave enough to jump on the podcast to share their experience. But with that, I hope you enjoy my conversation with Yesenia. Yesenia, welcome to the podcast. We're just going to jump right in and I'm going to have you introduce yourself.

Yesenia Soria: Hi, I'm Yesenia Soria. I am a rising three L attending Texas Tech University School of Law. I'm actually in the JD/MBA dual degree program at Tech. So, I'm currently pursuing my master of business administration as well.

Alexis Robertso...: And you just finished your time as a summer associate with Foley, which we're going to talk quite a bit about. And I swear the moment we started recording,

my neighbor's dog started barking. So, hopefully that does not mess up my audio too much. But before we get to your summer associate experience, let's talk a little bit about you and what in life led you to law school and to getting your MBA. So, somewhat starting at the beginning, where are you from? Where did you grow up?

Yesenia Soria: So, I was born and raised in Pampa, Texas. It's a small town in our Northeast of Amarillo, Texas. It's in the Texas pan handle, which for those who don't know, it's the Northern rectangular part of Texas. So, I was originally from there and didn't move until I started my undergraduate studies.

Alexis Robertso...: I really appreciated that you explained exactly where, because when you said the rectangular part, I was like, yes, I know where that is. And listeners can't see this, but she literally made like a rectangle with her fingers. I was like, that's real helpful for the Midwesterner. All right. If I was to find you and say, I don't know, late elementary school, middle school, what was life like for you? What were you into? What kind of kid were you?

Yesenia Soria: Oh, that's hard. Okay. So, I've always loved school. So, growing up, my parents created this household that encouraged curiosity and learning. And so from an early age I actually loved school and they also encouraged us to you take part in other activities. I played sports, I did volleyball and soccer, and I competed in cross country and track. My brother was similar. He competed in different sports. We both took instrument lessons. I took piano lessons for nine years actually.

Alexis Robertso...: And I wondered if you were going to mention a sibling when you said us. I know for me, I also love school, but I think part of that is because I was an only child and there wasn't a lot else to do. It was kind of boring at home. That's interesting though. It's funny. A lot of, I think people who go on to be lawyers are similar and will describe themselves as, I really enjoyed school, or I was kind of nerdy, or I really enjoyed reading. But we also have this athletic streak, I've noticed. At least for those on the podcast. That might be something I'm self-selecting for. I don't [crosstalk 00:05:06].

Yesenia Soria: I think you're right. Yeah.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. A number of collegiate athletes. All right. So, that was kind of what life was like. It sounds like you had a lot of activities growing up, especially I imagine in middle school, high school, if you're juggling all of those sports, what was that transit then from high school to college? And what was your thought making process there as to where you decided to go?

Yesenia Soria: So, the summer before my senior year, my parents actually told me to pick five colleges that I wanted to go and visit. And we did that and I picked five in Texas because I knew I wanted going to stay in Texas. So, we visited University of Texas, Baylor University, Texas Christian University, Abilene Christian University

and Texas Tech University. And I was dead set on going to Texas Tech originally, actually. But we did that tour and I was like, you know what? I don't know if it's the time for me to go to Tech.

I just, I didn't feel like I was going to fit at the time. So, I applied to the other four and I was a first gen college student. So, all of this was entirely new and foreign for my family. I had narrowed it down to Baylor and Abilene Christian at the end. But Abilene Christian provided a lot of scholarships and help. And I actually got a scholarship that was specifically meant for travel. So, at some point during my four years, I was going to get the chance to travel on that scholarship. And I was like, okay-

Alexis Robertso...: That's awesome. I didn't know that, that even existed. I mean, now that you say it, it makes sense. But wow. Okay.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah. So, all of the opportunities seemed to be opening up there and I ended up going to Abilene Christian and I loved it. I mean, it was a total culture shock for me. It's so funny. Everybody thinks Abilene, Texas, it's got a population of like a 100,000 people. And so everybody's like, wow, really small. But that was a change to me in terms of it was a bigger place. It was a bigger city. I was suddenly around a lot of different people, a lot of different cultures. But it was such a great jumping off point for me. And I loved my time there for sure.

Alexis Robertso...: Wow. And I think you already said it, so you may be like, yeah, that's all there is to say. But I would love if you would actually tell me a bit more, because you mentioned being first generation to go to college. I think a lot of people who listen to this show have the same experience. But what was in terms of your family trying to help you figure it out and then that, like you said, that transition was a culture shock. Are there any additional things that really stand out to you about adjusting to that, to college?

Yesenia Soria: I mean, it was definitely hard just because I didn't know what to expect and my parents really couldn't tell me what to expect either. They were very encouraging. And so I was very privileged in the sense that I did have that familial support, but there was a lot of concern about, okay, how am I going to do this? What's it like to live in a dorm? What's it like to live in a different city and go to school there? How are we going to pay for all of that essentially? And so I had to work really hard to get scholarships through ACU and local scholarships here. And I remember that process was pretty difficult. We had to figure out a lot of things on the go. I had to figure out a lot of things once I got there.

Alexis Robertso...: It's really, really complex. I mean, I'm talking to somebody who's almost 20 years removed from that process. And my parents did both go to college, but when you start adding in figuring out aid and all of that, and it sounds like you were very fortunate to get the scholarship packages that you got. And maybe we'll talk a bit about that travel one in particular, in a few minutes. But there

really is this web of administrative stuff to figure out. And I remember at what probably 17, because I actually was 17 when I first stepped foot on campus, because I'm a late birthday. But thinking I had to figure out and tell my parents, like I somehow found things, found deadlines and was like, hey, can you fill this out because it needs ... But it was so complicated that I was just like, did these colleges think someone's literally making it their job? Some adult who's working is making it their full-time job to figure out when my forms need to get sent in.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. Totally, totally. And by the way, how far away was Abilene from where you grew up?

Yesenia Soria: It was only four hours away. So, it wasn't crazy far.

Alexis Robertso...: Okay. But that's still a ways because it sounds like you hadn't really been away until then.

Yesenia Soria: Right, yeah. So, it was different.

Alexis Robertso...: So, what did you major in, in college?

Yesenia Soria: So, I was actually a business management major.

Alexis Robertso...: Tell me why. How'd you decide? What was the thought process behind that?

Yesenia Soria: So, funny. When I was in first, second grade, I remember they used to ask us the questions, what do you want to be when you grow up? And I used to always say, I'm going to be a business woman. That's what I knew I wanted to do. And I-

Alexis Robertso...: That's such a good, solid answer.

Yesenia Soria: And I don't know if I actually knew what that meant, but there was just a hard about businesses and organizations that had always fascinated me. And so I was like, okay, I'm going to do this. And I majored in it knowing that I already had a little bit of an interest in going into law. But I was like, okay, if I major in this and then decide not to go to law school, I can still make a career out of this. And so that's what I did and I stuck with it. I mean, I know a lot of people change paths early on, but I love the courses that I was in. And so I was like, this is it for me.

Alexis Robertso...: That's fantastic. And also I ask everybody this, and I mean for you're a little bit closer to the decision making process than some of us. But I do think pretty much everybody is just usually operating on pretty limited information, which is why it's amazing that you stuck with it. But that is I think a good foundational degree for understanding the basics of, in many ways how the world works. And then, and correct me if I'm wrong. You went to law school right after finishing

undergrad or did you have time off in between? Okay. You went straight through.

Yesenia Soria: No, I went straight.

Alexis Robertso...: Okay. Tell me about that. When and how did you decide to go to law school?

Yesenia Soria: So, I had been interested in it since early on. So, I was a pre-law, I had a pre-law concentration, but then I took business law the spring of my sophomore year and I was like, okay, this is the class where I'm really going to get to figure out, okay, is this really something I'm interested in or do I just need to let go of that law school dream? And it was interesting. The professor was actually, he had actually been an attorney. He graduated from Texas Tech University and he'd practiced in Amarillo for a decade. So, we had a little bit of that connection and he taught the class in a way that was very similar to a law school class. We would get a case, we'd have to pull it up on LexisNexis and then he would code call people in class. And I actually-

Alexis Robertso...: That's amazing. Sorry, I'm interrupting you just to say that's amazing. I remember taking a business law class in undergrad and it was more like a summary of concepts. So, it would summarize offer and acceptance to you. But you definitely were not reading case law. So, that's amazing. Go on, go on.

Yesenia Soria: No, so it was interesting. It was scary. I mean you go from being in regular classes where you are not volunteered to speak at all to you get into this class and he is asking all these questions and he's directing the whole conversation through questions. It was entirely new to me, but a part of me loved it. I really liked what we talked about in that class. And I was like, okay, this is something that I think I want to do.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah.

Alexis Robertso...: And so that led the way. I'm assuming you started applying to law schools towards the end of your time in college. Is that how that worked?

Yesenia Soria: Yeah, so I spoke with him and with the pre-law advisor and went through that process, which again was something totally different, totally new. But yeah, from there I went straight into law school.

Alexis Robertso...: Now Texas Tech comes back. So, decision making process to go to Texas Tech how'd that work.

Yesenia Soria: So, I actually applied to Texas tech and again, Baylor University and I got accepted to both. But there was just a part of me that felt like maybe it was time to go and revisit that dream and go to Tech. And I spoke with that

professor who had attended Tech and he told me a little bit about the environment and it seemed like a place where I felt like I would fit in. And then I actually went in toward the school. And while I was sitting in on one of the classes, I run into an old class last mate from ACU.

Alexis Robertso...: You're like, I know people here. Was that person also considering going? Did they end up going?

Yesenia Soria: They were already in law school. They were a year older than me.

Alexis Robertso...: Perfect.

Yesenia Soria: So, they were actually in that class. Yeah.

Alexis Robertso...: That's perfect.

Yesenia Soria: I mean, it was crazy just the odds of that happening. But we talked very briefly after his class because he had to go to another class and he was like, look, this is a school where it's not necessarily the most prestigious school, but it's a place where the professors really want you to learn the material. You're going to become friends with your classmates. You're all just trying to help each other. You're helping each other take notes. You're trying to put those outlines together. It's got that sense of community, that west Texas feel that you're used to. I think you'd love it. And after that conversation and after that tour, I was like, okay, this is where I want to go.

Alexis Robertso...: I love that. All right. I'm going to drive people a little bit crazy. I have to go back before we talk a little more about law school. Because I forgot to ask you if you actually ended up traveling in undergrad, did you?

Yesenia Soria: Yes. So, I actually, I studied abroad in [livesig 00:13:57] Germany. I was there for five weeks, I think between my sophomore and junior year. And it was incredible. Again, I had never been on a plane until then. And so I go from never being on a plane to, I mean, we were on this little plane from Dallas to Chicago and then we flew from Chicago to Toronto and then we made the flight from Toronto to Berlin. So, all of it, I mean just in one day I'm like, whoa, all these different flights, all these different changes. And again, I really had spent the majority of my life in west Texas. Now between Pampa and Abilene. And so being in Germany, again, totally different. But it was amazing.

Alexis Robertso...: I'm just sitting here marveling at you saying it was the first time you're on a plane, which was planes. It was to go to Germany. It wasn't like a quick trip to somewhere close. That's technically out of the country, like The Bahamas. It was like, no, I'm going straight to Germany. And I'm glad I remember because I did say I was like, I have to find out. But that's fantastic. And I love that schools or at least some schools are building in those opportunities. I realize it was a number of years ago for you, but that's wonderful. Okay.

We're back to law school. I did want to pick up on something you said about the feedback you got from your friend or former classmate, about Texas Tech and that feeling of community. What you described to me was that this is going to be a community and at the risk of gilding the Lily here, but this is where like me being diversity director does come in. I think what you've mentioned about being first generation navigating these things for the first time and finding a school that you really felt like was going to support you. Those things really make a lot of sense. So, hopefully I'm not stretching.

Yesenia Soria: No, absolutely. That's absolutely true.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. When I say that. And also, you've probably seen some of this, but as the legal industry really works, I think to hopefully be more diverse, more inclusive. We talk a lot about this. Like how can we, particularly large firms be more ... it's not even open and understanding. But if there's more we can do to assist first generation or other underrepresented groups. But part of it is, I do think there can be a little misunderstanding in how people actually decide on what law school to go to. A lot of people it's can I still be near my family? Could I keep my part-time job? Could I get home sometimes? It's not just like, let me look at the top of U.S. News & World Report and see where I should go.

Yesenia Soria: I didn't even know that law schools were ranked until I got to law school. There was just so much I didn't know. And so to me again, it was that community feel and actually my younger brother was already attending Texas Tech at the time.

Alexis Robertso...: Oh, that's perfect too. Also, I love that you just said that, because this is stuff that I talk to people about and I'll say, you're forgetting a large swath of the US or the world is not, we aren't aware of all these factors. They're not like just only apply to the top 25 schools. No, it's I want to go to law school, there's a law school over there. It's going to help me be a lawyer. What is wrong with that plan? And so amazing talent is everywhere is, is my point. Sorry. I love that you said some things that highlight that. But okay. You go to law school, you start law school. What is that like? Was it also an adjustment or how was that for you?

Yesenia Soria: That was absolutely an adjustment. Absolutely. So, I didn't really know what all to expect in turn of what the classes were going to be like, what the workload was going to be like, how all of a sudden I was going to go from looking at spreadsheets and things like that to, I am reading all day, every day.

Alexis Robertso...: Different side of your brain, different half of the brain.

Yesenia Soria: Absolutely. And so it was a little bit difficult at first and intimidating. I mean, these professors are all incredibly smart people who have these amazing experiences, who have done all of these cool things and they're the ones that are teaching us. And we're trying to show, okay, we're learning these things.

We're picking it up. And also the grading system. You go from, okay, you're taking four or five exams. Right. [crosstalk 00:17:53].

Alexis Robertso...: Multiple tests to just one.

Yesenia Soria: Exactly, which was just crazy. And the bell curve. Oh my gosh. I did not know that was a thing. And I was introduced to that the first week during one of our little meetings when they were telling us about law school. And I was like, is this real? Is this really how they grade people? And it was real and it's true. And so just learning about all of that and trying to navigate through that was pretty difficult at first. But again, you get close to your classmates, you get close to your professors. There are people there willing to help you like my advisor. And through that, I was able to get through it and I've grown to love it. It's absolutely been a dream come true.

Alexis Robertso...: Oh my gosh. You just see me nodding a lot. All the things you listed are I think the big factors that can be a shock to the system of many when they walk in and the bell curve is tough. I'm happen to be somebody that's, this is going to sound so cheesy. But particularly given what I do, I have to think the universe is abundant. There's room for all of us to do well. So, to be in this situation of like, well, no, no, no. Even if you all kill it, someone's getting a C and someone's getting an A+.

And I will figure out, even if at the end of the day, the C was still a stellar answer. You still got a C, because we had to at the distribution, it's really hard. But also from what you're saying, it sounds like you haven't been shy in terms of asking for help or using your resources. So, like you mentioned the advisor and professors and all that. And I'm sorry, I can't help, but just try to give the students, listening the hint, hint of when it comes to that. Because when I've been on campus at various law schools, I have full on rant to where I'm like, listen, you or somebody has paid a whole lot of money for you to be here right now. And I get that your professor might seem a little bit scary, but you go to those office hours anyway.

Yesenia Soria: Yes, absolutely. Oh my gosh. And honestly they would appreciate it. I had professors that were like, please, please come. We've got snacks here and everything. Let me answer questions. And it's hard getting past that fear. But I mean, once you get to where you're comfortable asking those questions, you're going to do so much better and you'll really love it.

Alexis Robertso...: Like we have snacks, there's juice, there's cookies available, just come on down. And some of them truly will give you the keys to the kingdom. There are some professors who will be like, oh, here's an exam I used last semester. Some won't but some will. And that's huge. Okay. But you do make the adjustment to law school and then at some point Foley & Lardner comes onto the scene. So, how does that process happen?



- Yesenia Soria: Okay. So, let me go back a bit. My one L summer, I actually didn't get a chance to work. That is when I started my MBA, my master [crosstalk 00:20:34].
- Alexis Robertso...: Oh my gosh. Yeah. Talk about your decision to do your MBA and how that works with your JD.
- Yesenia Soria: So, I made that decision. I think it was the spring of my one L year and I kept going back and forth on whether I wanted to do it, because it's not required. You don't need an MBA to do anything or to be any type of attorney, not even in business law. And so I had some people tell me, look, it's not really worth it. Why are you going to do that? And then I had other people that were like, no, it's great. Go and get that additional information because you'll get a little bit more insight into businesses and how they do their thing. And I made that decision to do it. So, my first summer I took five courses. That's what I did, my one L summer.
- Alexis Robertso...: So, your first summer, you're starting your MBA work.
- Yesenia Soria: Yes, exactly. And it was around that time when COVID had really hit, it was 2020. And so I already knew that opportunities were going to be limited. And I was like, okay, I'll just focus on my classes and I'll do that. And so then the OCI process starts late one L summer, early into two L year.
- Alexis Robertso...: So, kind of where we are right now. We're in August 2021, it was probably like August-ish of 2020.
- Yesenia Soria: Exactly.
- Alexis Robertso...: Something like that. Yeah.
- Yesenia Soria: Yeah. And I am panicking about what I'm going to do because I didn't get that first summer of experience. And I was like, okay, I'm just going to interview with as many firms as I can through the OCI process, that practice in an area that I'm interested in and that have offices and areas that I'm interested in. So, those are my two narrowing factors. But other than that, I'm like, okay, let's just interview.
- Alexis Robertso...: Let's get a job. Let's try and get a job.
- Yesenia Soria: Exactly. And I'm going through that process. And I think Foley & Lardner actually came in to do their OCIs a little bit later. I think it was around maybe late September, early October. And so I still hadn't made my decision at that point. I had to reject a couple of offers at that point just because I didn't feel like they were a good fit.
- Alexis Robertso...: We got to circle back to that by the way, keep going. But we'll get back there.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah. So, I decide, okay, I'm going to apply for the summer associate position with Foley & Lardner at the Dallas office. I go through that first interview. I get callbacks and I will have to say at least with Foley & Lardner, what drew me to the firm was that it felt like they were really focused on getting to know who I was as a person. So, a lot of my other interviews had focused on, okay, my grades, why had I gotten this? How did I do in that? Just regular things that were on my transcript or on my resume.

Alexis Robertso...: Well, and then I be immediately turned to any questions for us versus like, tell me more about you.

Yesenia Soria: Right. Exactly. And I remember with these interviews with Foley & Lardner, it was like, what books are you reading right now? And what are some of your interests? I remember I threw thrifting out in one of them and they were like, wow, like tell me more about that. What got you into that? What's been your coolest find?

Alexis Robertso...: Oh, by the way, yes, me too. So, we could also talk thrifting on the show, but let's keep going.

Yesenia Soria: Yes. And all of that really drew me in and I took some time to do a little bit of research on Foley's website ahead of time too. And I thought one of the things that was super interesting was this focus on those values. Those, I think, is it the eight values?

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. Our core values, which I'm sorry, listeners. I don't have them in front of me, so I'm not going to list all of them. But they are values that you would imagine an organization should have like people and clients. But they are very true to the firm. And we very much do live by those. Absolutely.

Yesenia Soria: Right. Well, one of the things that I saw was that in the articles that were being posted on the website, it was connecting back to those values. And the other thing that I think really pulled me in was the emphasis on pro bono work, which was something that I had always wanted to do. And I thought it was so fascinating that this huge firm was so interested in turning around and going, okay, now, how are we going to help our communities? How are we going to help people who really need the help, but can't get it. And so all of these things pulled me in and I eventually got the offer after the second round of interviews. And it was just like, yes, this is it. This is the one. And so I ultimately made that decision.

Alexis Robertso...: Oh my gosh, okay. We will talk about your summer, but I have to talk about this process a little bit as well. Because you said a number of things and for people who listen to this while they're going, while they're doing the same process you do. One, I assume that whole process for you is virtual is one thing.

Yesenia Soria: It was. It was all virtual. Yeah.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. So, I don't know. We might talk a little bit more about that, but just so people know, I think this year's going to be a mix depending on what part of the country one's in and what's going with the pandemic. But also you mentioned that you intentionally had declined or maybe decided not to move forward with some other firms, because it just didn't feel right. And I don't want to name names and disparage anyone. But, yeah. What was it that made you feel that way about certain other places?

Yesenia Soria: So, there was nothing particularly negative. All of these firms sounded like great firms. I loved getting to meet the attorneys. I had the opportunity to ask a lot of questions and everybody was super kind. But there was just something about, I guess the way the interview was approached that made me feel like, okay, they're really looking at who I am on the paper. And I just don't know if they're really going to be interested in investing in me.

And I also wasn't sure if I was going to fit in with that environment. And it was hard saying no. I'm definitely not a risk taker. So, having to say no to these job offers where I could wake up the next morning and I've got something set [crosstalk 00:26:04] for the long summer. Yes, exactly. It was hard. It was really difficult for me having to turn around and say, thank you so much for the opportunity. I don't think I'm going to take this, but I really appreciate your time. But yeah, there was just something about that emphasis on who I was on paper versus who I was as a professional, and as a person who was still growing and trying to figure out what she wanted to do.

Alexis Robertso...: Which is disappointing. Because we can read the paper, but it is the stuff about, oh she has a hobby thrifting. But that's the stuff may not, it may not say on your resume. And I do. I mean, I fully admit there will be some people listen to this who are like, that is crazy. How could you possibly ... But I do think it's a little bit of a theme throughout what you said about your decision, how you chose a college, how you chose a law school is really feeling like I'm going to be valued and supported and a part of a community. So, I think it's very consistent and talking about values, it's a great value to have. And the hard thing in terms of talking about this process for students is bottom line. Yes, people need jobs. You need someone to train you. Period.

If you want, we can end right there with advice to law students. But, if we're going to keep going that, do you feel comfortable? Do you think you can really be who you are, are incredibly important terms of the longevity at a given place. But also your ability to really learn and thrive while you're there. So, in some ways it's a privilege to be able to even make that inquiry, but it is huge. And I mean, I'm clapping for you as well. Because obviously we're thrilled that you joined Foley and spent the summer with us. But I do think that's so interesting to explore, because to a lot of people it's going to be a little bit surprising. Oh, there was something else. Do you have, before we move on to your experience as a summer associate at Foley, do you have any general tips for students

navigating OCI in particular virtual OCI? Even if it's like really mundane stuff that seems obvious but that you wish someone had said to you?

Yesenia Soria: Ooh. Okay.

Alexis Robertso...: Because I have tips by the way.

Yesenia Soria: I mean, okay. The first thing that I would say, and I know that it's one that you're told often, but I think it's a good one. Do come ready to ask questions and to really learn about that firm and be engaged. Every firm's a little bit different. Every attorney that's going into interview is someone totally different, who's taken their own path, who's had their own experiences. And you're going to have that window in every interview where they're going to say any questions. And I think it's a good opportunity to ask those questions about things that maybe wouldn't have come out in the conversation otherwise. I really enjoyed getting to hear about people's stories because some people were like, yeah, I went straight through. And other were like, no, I had all these careers before.

Alexis Robertso...: 20 years before law school. Absolutely. So, I literally just posted a piece to Foley's career perspectives' blog with five tips for interviews. And what you just said was one of them. It was ask thoughtful, I call it thoughtful personal questions. Sure. Ask how the summer program works. Sure. Ask pro bono works. You want to know that, ask that. But like you're saying, ask people about how they picked their practice or what they're working on. And one, people love talking about themselves.

So, suddenly you are just a really engaging human for asking them, but you're exactly right. It does let you learn about people in a way you wouldn't. And I think the benefit of the process, whether or not you work at a given firm is you're going to meet a whole bunch of lawyers and you might learn some stuff from them. And also I want to give you some kudos because when we jumped into this recording platform and maybe it's just luck, but you were already all set up and ready to go. And I think that's another tip for virtual interviews.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah, for sure.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. So, maybe you brought that skill over. But I know we all understand Zoom. We all understand all these platforms, but just for those interviews, log in early. Make sure everything's working properly. By the way, your phone can be a hotspot if that's the one time life your internet decides to drop. Maybe know how to do that. Other thing is, don't be afraid of the phone. We are interviewing literally thousands of students at Foley, just like all these other firms, stuff's going to happen. At a certain point, hopefully at least your phone works and you can go to the website, look up the person because Zoom is down or Microsoft Teams is down and you can call them. Yeah. That's a big one. My other big tip is to talk in soundbites and try not to get so nervous that you can't take like 12 minutes to respond to tell me about yourself.

Yesenia Soria: Yes.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. That's 12 of your 20 minutes. And otherwise most firms just want to get a sense for who you are. And there's actually, there's some other tips. I'm trying to think of what they were, but those are truly, those are the big ones. If you want to read more, find it on the Career Perspectives blog. It'll be probably a few posts back for people, but okay. So, you finish your second year of law school and then you actually start at Foley. So, this is the big question. I've made people wait 30 minutes to hear. Sorry. What was it like? What was it like being a summer in the Dallas office?

Yesenia Soria: Oh my gosh. It was incredible. And I'm not just saying that because I'm on this podcast.

Alexis Robertso...: And it's not because I sent you a script beforehand.

Yesenia Soria: Right.

Alexis Robertso...: No, I did not, go on.

Yesenia Soria: It was just amazing. So, again, I didn't get a chance to work my first summer. I did a small internship during my second year. But this was my first true experience at an office and the environment was great from the get go. There were people coming by to introduce themselves. There were people reaching out via email, hey, let's do lunch. I also had the opportunity to reach out to people. And in terms of the work, I loved that I had the opportunity to work on real projects for real clients. And they reflected, like these projects reflected projects that I'll potentially get to do as a junior associate.

And the great thing about being at Foley and being at the Dallas office was that there was this open door policy where if I had a question about something or I was just confused about something, somebody was willing to talk through that with me to say, hey, okay, this is how you do this. How you correct the PDF. Or maybe it's more, this is how this document's going to fit into this deal and why it's so important. And getting that broader picture was so nice. One of the best pieces of advice I got was be a sponge. Just this is the time to be a sponge. And I felt like being at the Foley office, I had that opportunity and there were really people there trying to help me to absorb and learn as much as possible, I was there while still, also trying to get to know who I was as a person.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah. Well that advice of be a sponge is great. And I really do not mean this in a negative way. So, I hope people don't see it that way. But when you are a law student, particularly a summer associate, you can completely, you can ask all these questions that it might feel a little weird to ask when you've been at the firm for like five or seven years. So, you can do that, naive, bright eyed law student. That's like, how do you equity partner at this firm? And I'm telling you, whatever partner you ask will likely sit you down and be like, well, it's a variety

of factors and da, da, da. And tell you things that you might be surprised about. But yeah, asking questions as a summer is so important and as is like just the first many years of your career. But let's dig in a little. So, tell me a little bit about the things that you worked on. What were your assignments?

Yesenia Soria: So, a lot of my assignments were related to mergers and acquisitions or venture capital. So, I was in the transactions practice group and I think that's why I got to do those projects. And so I got to do side letter agreements. I got to do common unit purchase agreements. I got to do these ancillary documents, which are essentially just documents that help to close a deal. And yeah-

Alexis Robertso...: By the way, thank you for defining that. I have been around this industry for the better part of a decade and a half and I'm nodding in my head and I'm like, I don't know what she means right now. But ...

Yesenia Soria: Right. There's several different-

Alexis Robertso...: I want you to define it.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah, no. There's several different types. So, that's not all of them, but those were the ones that I got to do. And actually, I had a really cool opportunity where I got to spend a week at a client's office. So, we've got some of our Dallas attorneys at a client's office in Dallas because they were doing tons of deals at a rapid pace. And I got to go and do that for a week and just shadow and be involved in those calls, take notes. And it was an incredible experience. I just, I didn't even think I was going to get to do that.

Alexis Robertso...: That's wonderful. Yeah.

Yesenia Soria: And I don't-

Alexis Robertso...: We don't need to get too into the details that particular client, but I imagine there's some sort of secondment arrangement. And so for law students who don't know what that term means, secondment is when a law firm will have its lawyers essentially work at a client for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it's just to help a client out because they don't have the capacity in their legal department. But it sounds like we have something like that going on. So, it's wonderful that you also got a little bit of that in-house perspective and what I also love so much about all of this is it sounds to me like you also getting your MBA is very much relevant to the practice area that you are now connected with and presumably joining post law school. So, it's all starting to come together.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah, it really is. But I will say the great thing too about being a summer associate was that I had the opportunity to do a couple of other projects outside a transaction. So, I did a couple of litigation projects while I was there as well. And it was nice to just get a feel for other areas that I wanted to dabble and see

what that's like. Or maybe I wanted to do a little bit more writing, things like that. And that was a good thing about being a summer associate, it's that you get the chance to try out all these different projects and start to gauge what you would like to do.

Alexis Robertso...: And how did you get your projects? How did that work?

Yesenia Soria: So, a lot of my projects I actually got just from attorneys coming to my office and saying, hey, I've got this project. I think it'd be something great for you to look into, to learn about. Do you have time? So, the majority of my projects came in from attorneys in the office, just swinging by or shooting an email. But I had the chance to do a couple through the work allocation website. And those projects were for attorneys in other offices. So, for instance, I got to work with an attorney at the Chicago office and I thought that was pretty cool too, because otherwise I wouldn't have had the chance to work with somebody in another office. But through that system, I got to do these projects and meet other summer associates from other offices and team up with them and do these projects. So, that was pretty cool too.

Alexis Robertso...: Well. And I'll just, I'll add for the listeners in terms of Foley's process, because I'm sure the law student listening is like, wait, how does it work? How do they assign me? How does this work? So, it depends on the side of your office that you're joining. We will have some associates join us, particularly in our larger offices where they're not quite sure what they want to do. They might take corporate and litigation and a number of other things. And then sort of at the end of summer decide or state their preference for their practice areas. For some of our smaller offices, which Dallas I think it's one of our, it's not a particularly huge office. There will be more of a, okay, we really want you to be a summer associate, but here's where we likely have the need.

So, I think presumably for you Yesenia, it's in some sort of transactional capacity, so it can vary. And yes, I say this a little slowly, because I'm really hoping I'm not saying something that would make my director of recruiting scream right now where Alexis is just being wrong on the podcast. But I don't think I am. So, just keep that in mind. And then also depending on the size of the office, some summers may get most of their assignments through centralized work allocation system where we essentially ask our lawyers to put in assignments, and as a summer you can choose. But I think inevitably people start developing relationships. If you did one thing, the assignment database, that person might be like, oh you did that one thing.

You want to do this other thing too? And so it can become also very organic. And I will plug that if you want to hear more about Foley's process from the people in the know specifically, which is our director of recruiting, as well as the chair of our national recruiting committee, check out episode 56 of the podcast, which will be just to a few episodes before this one. So, thank you for letting me give that PSA, Yesenia. But also what about, so outside of work, were you able

... You mentioned lunch and coffee, were there other opportunities like social opportunities or just, what was that like as a summer?

Yesenia Soria: So, this was a weird year because of COVID. I think that there was still a little bit of hesitation about doing get togethers that had a lot of people, but we did have the chance to do a couple. I got to do a couple of happy hours with the women's attorneys from the Dallas office, the Tech grads from the Dallas office. They did junior associate happy hour. So, we got to do these happy hours with some of the younger attorneys who could share a little bit about their early experiences. And then towards the end of the summer, we did one summer get together at an attorney's house and she brought a taco truck and we just had a good time, ate tacos and churros, and that was fun. And then we did top golf my last week that I was there.

Alexis Robertso...: So, there were a number of opportunities. Yeah. Because as you mentioned, we are navigating a very weird time. And so in contrast I have had other summers on the podcast who it was largely a virtual experience, fully. And hopefully by the time next summer, I really hope all this pandemic stuff is in the rear view mirror, but just so people know what we're able to do in a given office, depends on what's going on in that municipality with various restrictions. And then additionally, I have to give a shout out to the broader recruiting team who I know also has a whole sort of summer framework of a variety of virtual events. They host this whole Foley academy thing that gets you up to speed on a variety of things at the firm. So, there's, I think a lot of different levels of engagement happening throughout the summer. And definitely correct me if I'm wrong, but I feel like that's the best way to describe it.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah, no, I definitely agree.

Alexis Robertso...: Yeah, but it was a weird, it was an interesting summer. But I like the fact that you were able to have more of that in person experience. I think to anybody going into a summer associate program generally speaking, it's important to the firm, it's important to Foley, but I think for most firms for you to both get great experience doing real work, but also to have time to get to know the firm. That's one of the big, important part of the summer experience. All right. So, for you, it sounds like you are planning to join our Dallas corporate practice post law school. Let me know if I'm wrong.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah. So, at this point I have received the offer. I haven't fully signed off, but I don't know what all I'm allowed to say on here, but-

Alexis Robertso...: I'd say it's looking positive. I'll do a custom [crosstalk 00:40:37] and clean everything up as need be. But no, I just, I really appreciate you for sharing all that insight. And I also think just overall, as you mentioned, because another thing you've highlighted, you mentioned this was your first time working in this sort of environment. So, I imagine there was a fair amount of adjustment in



general, but I like hearing that you a good experience and that you felt very welcomed at the firm.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah, no, I loved my experience. I definitely intend on signing that and taking that opportunity and I'm really excited to be back in Dallas. Honestly. I think it'll be so much fun.

Alexis Robertso...: Well, so I haven't had a chance to visit Foley's Dallas office, but something that I've very much forgotten now that I'm quite removed from process. But then I think you mean this is the first time I've worked where this speaks to. It feels different to go from being a law student to a law firm, suddenly being like, yeah, you're a summer associate here. Here's the office, take the elevator up to the whatever floor. It's like, you just made, tell me about you're like really me. This is where I work. What is going on?

Yesenia Soria: Oh yeah, absolutely. So, the office for Foley & Lardner in Dallas, it's in this building that's pretty new. I mean, not even 10 years old, it's pretty new. And I came in the first day and I was like, this is a stunning building. This is gorgeous. How am I going to fit in here? How am I supposed to work here? And coming from Pampa where the tallest building is the hospital to all of a sudden we're on the 17th floor. And we have this amazing view. It was intimidating at first. But it was also just this sensation of, wow, these attorneys to take the work seriously. They are here to get those clients and to show those clients through all these different ways that they're serious about providing excellent work and doing the best they can to ensure that the clients get that support that they need.

Alexis Robertso...: I had to raise that, because I assumed you had that. Because I had that same experience of just, oh, this is real now. I get that I'm not licensed yet, but this is lawyer life. I'm in this high rise. And I wanted to share it because I wanted to acknowledge it that I think a lot of people go through that, unless you've been somebody who's worked for a number of years and had that experience, there can be ... And I guess in a way it does get into that imposter syndrome realm where you're like, yeah, take me to the 17th floor, I'm office 1742 on the south side of the building. It's just an interesting, it's an interesting experience. Okay, and as we wind this down, Yesenia, you did mention thrifting. I have to ask you, tell me more. What does that mean? Also, I am somebody who watches these like TikTok thrift halls. So, that's my point of reference right now. And I do enjoy a good trip to see if I can find some good free stuff. But tell me more, tell me more about it.

Yesenia Soria: Yeah. I don't know. It is something that I've enjoyed since I was really little, I love going into these thrift stores or even going to garage sales and finding these cool pieces and sometimes even using them to create something new. But I've always had a good time with that. It's a great way to try out new trends or try out things that you want to try out without spending a ton of money. And as a-

Alexis Robertso...: It's treasure, your treasure hunting.

Yesenia Soria: Right. Exactly.

Alexis Robertso...: As we wind this down and we will get back to the law, I promise. But I will share we've had this last 18 months or so in this pandemic time period, for those of us who were used to working in offices, we have been at home. I have personally had to figure out how to dress like an adult again. And I think you're exactly right. If there's certain things you want to try out, maybe you can find the thrift store version. And I told my husband, I was like, I have to learn how to wear pants that aren't stretchy again. So, just bear with me, just bear with me.

But that's exactly right. So, I think we might be kindred spirits in that. But anyway, as we do wind this down, I want to take it back to the law and your experiences at Foley and in law school and just your life experiences. But when you think back, what would your advice be to either, I don't know, your earlier version of yourself or your advice to somebody who's contemplating a legal career or maybe heading into OCI, whoever you want to style that to.

Yesenia Soria: I mean, I think my biggest piece of advice across anything is be curious and eager to learn and embrace those opportunities. I am a true believer that in any room that you walk into in any experience you have with anybody that you talk to, there's something to learn. And I think that, that's something that you can take with you wherever you go. People care about you wanting to learn, wanting to absorb. And I think it just shows that you're engaged and that you're interested. And the other thing I would say, again, across everything you do is to have faith in yourself, believe in yourself and be true to yourself. I think it's easy to think that you have to be a certain person. Or that because you are a certain person, you can't do something. And a lot of times, if you remove that first op of yourself and you allow yourself to be truly you, you get this internal sense of power and ability to go through things in life. And I think those are the two biggest things that have helped me for sure.

Alexis Robertso...: That is fantastic advice. And on the note about being true to yourself, when you're authentically you, it means your connections are real. It's not people liking who they think you are, but who you really are. That is a perfect note to end on. The last thing I'll ask is if people have questions for you, can they feel free to find you on LinkedIn and reach out?

Yesenia Soria: Absolutely. Yes, please. I'd love to talk to anybody. Answer any questions or just chat. It'd be nice.

Alexis Robertso...: Thank you so much, Yesenia.

Yesenia Soria: Thank you.

Alexis Robertso...: Thank you for listening to The Path and The Practice. I hope you enjoyed the conversation and join us again next time. And if you did enjoy it, please share it, subscribe and leave us a review, as your feedback on the podcast is important to us. Also, please note that this podcast may be considered attorney advertising and is made available by Foley & Lardner LLP for informational purposes only. This podcast does not create an attorney, client relationship. Any opinions expressed here in do not necessarily reflect the views of Foley & Lardner LLP, its partners or its clients. Additionally, this podcast is not meant to convey the firm's legal position on behalf of any client, nor is it intended to convey specific legal advice.