As the academic year comes to a close, the Law, Societies & Justice Department (LSJ) reflects on achievements that made the year so special. Despite changes as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, LSJ students continue to demonstrate their perseverance as well as their hopefulness for the future. Our Department had the fortune of working with a student who exudes these characteristics in addition to being thoughtful and graceful in these difficult times—LSJ’s student communications assistant, Hunter Kulik.

Hunter joined our team in September 2019. When asked what inspired her to apply for the position, Hunter remembered that every time she entered the LSJ advising office she “felt highly supported” as staff took the time to listen to her concerns and provide input. Moreover, she admired how staff, faculty, and students genuinely engaged with one another. In reading past articles on the website, she saw how active the community was and felt motivated to contribute to it through her own storytelling. LSJ administrator Lindsay Cael remembers interviewing Hunter for the Communications Assistant role, noting her competence and “willingness to jump in.”

During her time here, Hunter wrote several stories covering faculty accomplishments such as new books, student activism on and off campus, as well as new-hires in the department including Rawan Arar, Kat Eli, and even me. In interviewing these various members of the LSJ community, Hunter noted that it was a “unique opportunity” to see the Department shift and grow. In conducting interviews she made “meaningful connections” and “immediately felt close to newcomers.” As Hunter is about to graduate and move into new roles, she reflects that this position helped her feel more confident about stepping into new spaces to meet people and forge relationships.

Beyond the office, Hunter fondly remembers her time as an LSJ major. From Professor Beckett's Drugs in Society course, to taking Professor Meyers’ Philanthropy through Social Justice course, she feels the major is constantly pushing her to think outside the box. Since her freshman year, Hunter “felt connected to the material” and motivated to learn more in depth about topics such as reformatory justice, immigrant rights, and drug policy even after graduation. Her connection to the major has even inspired her to persuade her younger peers to consider an LSJ major and provide application tips. In hearing this, Kat Eli, LSJ’s Academic Services Manager wasn’t surprised: “[Hunter] has this wisdom and incredible depth” which is reflected when she’s “speaking and sharing information.”

When asked what she will miss from her role and being a student at UW, Hunter and I both couldn’t help but laugh. The word everything was almost too obvious given how the coronavirus outbreak fundamentally changed so much in our lives. Although she
mentioned how she will miss the office banter and constantly being surrounded by people who make her work harder, she was excited to "move on and see herself in a new environment." She's looking forward to further pursuing journalism in concert with immigration issues. She also hinted that graduate school could be in her cards, but for the time being she wants to explore alternative methods of justice through work and traveling across Europe and South America. Using her experiences as a resource, she hopes to also become an active member in the alumni network. "It's kind of exciting," she muses aloud, "when I look back, what is going to stand out the most?"

As our interview came to a close, I asked Hunter if she could leave some words of wisdom to students in LSJ. She reflected on how she was often too hard on herself while studying at UW, and cautions others not to do the same. "Push yourself to engage and make connections... but don't be overly hard on yourself, because it's over way too quickly." Although Hunter will be leaving us, she set the tone for how work can and should be done in the LSJ office while embodying values of the program itself. We wish you the best in all your future endeavors Hunter and will miss you!