

Meet a Recent Graduate

Alina Venick, B.A. in Creative Writing, 2015

Alina Venick graduated from Georgia College with a B.A. in English and a minor in Political Science in 2015. She chose Georgia College for its creative writing program and focused on scriptwriting and creative nonfiction. Today, she works for Georgia Legal Services, where she provides civil legal representation to low-income clients.



What made a big difference to Alina’s education and success were the mentors she found at Georgia College. Speaking at a Graduate and Professional School Panel at Georgia College’s Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium in March 2021, Alina singled out faculty members **Dr. Katie Simon** and the late **Jennifer Hammack, J.D.**, for special mention.

“I think we can’t say this enough, how big of an impact our mentors had on us in college,” Alina said. “You never know what kind of assistance they are going to be able to provide you outside of class. I think there are some people who associate their professors with, ‘Oh, I can go to them to talk about this paper in this class.’” However, professors can do so much more. Alina encourages students to speak to professors about their personal and professional goals, pointing out “they’ve lived life outside of class.”

Alina’s mentors helped her think about her own life outside of class—specifically, her life and career after graduation.

Professor Hammack taught legal classes and coached the mock trial team, in which Alina participated. Professor Hammack also introduced Alina to an attorney in Milledgeville and helped her secure an internship with him, which was “incredibly helpful.” Alina says, “I recommend to anyone who wants to go to law school to work in a law office, if you get the opportunity, before you go to law school. You learn a little bit about it, you make connections, and you see before you go in, ‘Is this really what I want to do?’”

Alina's experience with that attorney in Milledgeville convinced her that her future was in law. Her mentors also helped her in applying to law school by writing letters of recommendation and taking the time to discuss and edit her personal statement – which ultimately underwent thirteen revisions. Alina was accepted to the University of Georgia School of Law and graduated in 2018.

At Georgia Legal Services, Alina represents those who otherwise would not be able to afford legal representation. She obtains protective orders for domestic violence survivors, assists clients in accessing unemployment benefits, and helps tenants in housing cases. These services have become increasingly important. Legal representation in obtaining a protective order can protect a domestic violence survivor from an abuser and give the survivor the financial resources to keep from returning to that abuser. With the Covid-19 pandemic putting numerous Georgians out of work, assistance in navigating the Georgia Department of Labor to receive unemployment benefits and representation in housing cases can affect whether a client becomes homeless, or whether a client has utilities or can continue to pay for their medications. In this important work, Alina constantly uses the rigorous training in writing that she received at Georgia College.

According to Alina, “Teaching me to be a better writer was huge, because the legal profession is also writing intensive. Just developing those writing skills was incredibly important.” Learning to write scripts and creative nonfiction was especially helpful. In scriptwriting, Alina learned to focus on the impact and implications of characters' words, which has helped her analyze evidence and testimony. In creative nonfiction, she learned about crafting a narrative and how words impact the reader. **Peter Selgin**, her creative nonfiction professor, emphasized eliminating unnecessary words and selectively (and sparingly) using a semi-colon—both of which lessons have served Alina well as an attorney.

Alina has found the work from other English classes also extremely useful. Dr. Katie Simon's American literature classes, for example, focused on slave and captivity narratives and often centered on the stories of women of color. These classes taught her how to read a story through the lens of race and gender. These issues are prevalent in Alina's current work, as African Americans and women faced higher job loss during the pandemic.

Looking back on her time at Georgia College, Alina advises undergraduates, “Get a really diverse experience. Go to communities that you would normally never go to, whether that's through a job or community service. Take classes in subjects that you would normally never take. It just gets you to think in a certain way. For me, I have to be culturally competent for the job that I do. So, I think that getting an early start on that, with at least thinking outside of what applies to me, who I identify as, was something that was very useful.”

