

Nomination for *Samantha Holcomb* to the
Vermont Law School Alumni Association Board of Directors

Name: Samantha Holcomb
Degree/Graduation Year: MELP 2012

Vermont Law School is at a pivotal point in shaping its future. There have been some bumps in the road over the past few years, but the VLS community has remained focused on bringing about positive environmental change. I believe this is due, in large part, to passionate students and alumni who believe in the mission and values of Vermont Law School and who have similar, yet diverse interests in all aspects of environmental law and policy.

In the next five years, I would like to see VLS better harness and channel the enthusiasm of its students and alumni to further set itself apart from all other environmental law institutions. We must continue to promote and teach the diverse facets of environmental law, and prepare our graduates for the up-hill battles they will inevitably face during their careers. I believe VLS has already begun to do this by offering certificate programs that cover various topics in environmental law and policy. Additional unique programs or certificates should be developed further in the coming years.

Most importantly, VLS should remain a small, tight-knit community of individuals working together and looking out for one another. One of our greatest strengths as an institution is in our size, and in our sense of community. The key to success in the next five years will be figuring out a way to better use those innate qualities to our advantage.

Five years after graduating from Vermont Law School, I have held two positions (and I am in the process of transitioning to a third at a private environmental consulting firm in Syracuse, New York) that have given me the experience and helped me hone skills to helping me achieve my visions for VLS in the next five years, as a Planner in the Upper Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and more recently as a Senior Project Manager with the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development. Both positions required clear, concise communication, the ability to multitask at all levels of a project, as well as the ability coordinate with individuals at the local, state, federal and private level, often with conflicting goals. These are essential skills to have when working with a large group of people, and/or to promote interest or participation in a process. Working in the public sector, I have encountered situations where it was necessary to diffuse tension in the room, or calm down a contentious conversation. As a Planner and Senior Project Manager, I was required to transition from assessing a situation or topic from a “16,000 foot” perspective to an “on the ground” perspective. Finally, and likely due to my scientific background, I am a methodical and rational thinker with an eye for detail, which will be useful in helping to develop strategies for the future.

I believe one of the keys to building alumni participation at events and giving is to build relationships with alumni and continue to demonstrate that the work VLS is involved in is crucial to making positive progress in the environmental realm. Part of this is making alumni feel important, but also making them feel confident that their participation or financial support of VLS is directly benefitting the institution's overall mission and/or achieving real results. As previously mentioned, I believe most alumni feel a sense of being part of the "VLS community," but they may not feel like their participation or contributions are meaningful to the wider community. It is important for the VLSAA to help them understand the importance of their continued connection to the VLS community, and that their support is part of the "solution" to environmental issues that many individuals are seeking.

If given the opportunity to sit on the VLSAA Board of Directors, I would choose to serve on the Career Services Committee. The positions I have held are both a good fit for a MELP graduate, as it encompasses various regulatory, scientific and writing opportunities. I also have a number of MELP alumni friends that I continue to keep in touch with, and who are doing great work in both the US and abroad, and could connect interested students to them if desired.

I possess both the resources and ability to make the Board a priority of the three-year term. Currently, I live in Syracuse, New York and plan to physically attend as many meetings as possible. I believe my ability to physically attend the meetings is an important consideration, and will enable me to be as effective and participatory as possible.

Alumni Service

None up until this point of submitting a nomination for a 3M director seat.

VLS Activities

Member of the Environmental Law Society; member of the Ocean & Coastal Law Chapter

Professional/Community Accomplishments

Interned at Conservation Law Foundation, spring 2012

Became a full-time employee at Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, fall 2012

Received my Certified Floodplain Manager certification, April 2013

Worked with several towns in the area to discuss and improve their flood resilience, 2013-2014

"Member" of VNRC's Water Caucus

Became a full-time employee at the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development in July 2015, promoted to Senior Project Manager in June 2016

- Also held position of Program policy and compliance manager