

At a Glance

Major

History and Political Science

Immediate Post-Grad Pursuits

- Progressive legal work

Continuing Education

- Law Degree

Current Title

Executive Director

Employer

Friends of Farmworkers, Inc.

Entry-Level Position

Paralegal; Outreach worker

Further Opportunities in Field

- Staff Attorney
- Supervising Attorney

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A Network of Friends Social Impact with Karen Detamore BMC '70

As the executive director of Friends of Farmworkers, Inc., an organization that works to improve the lives of farmers, Karen Detamore is encouraged daily by the way she is able to impact people directly. Accomplishing the goal of building a strong, effective, and lasting organization requires Detamore to specialize in many different areas. She says, "Whenever someone asks me what I do on a daily basis, I always say that there is no typical day."



Her main duties include fundraising, budgeting, public relations, community education, personnel decisions, direct legal work, legislative testimony, and training staff in legal services organizations.

However, client crises change the agenda of any given day. Since this flexible schedule requires extensive public relations work, her days are occupied by meetings, time on the phone, some traveling, and a lot of email correspondences.

As a student, the atmosphere of the Bi-Co community nurtured Detamore's interest in social issues, and after her time at BMC, Detamore became involved in political and progressive legal work. Then, she began a series of jobs and post-graduate work through which she created a network of friends that eventually led to her current job. These experiences, among others, included law school, the Military Law Project in Japan, and National Coordinator of American Friends Service Committee's criminal justice programs.

Detamore advises students pursuing this field to acquire specific legal knowledge, but she places even more emphasis on developing excellent writing and speaking skills in order to succeed. "If you can't communicate your ideas," she says, "they won't go anywhere." Time management skills and the ability to prioritize are also essential for success in this field because there is not enough time or resources to meet the great demand of clients and their needs.

She encourages anyone interested in this field to get involved in related projects or internships as soon as possible but to remain flexible in academic work. She thinks students should study all sorts of things and especially emphasizes the need to learn a foreign language, preferably Spanish.

Eventually attending law or graduate school becomes necessary for advancement, but Detamore emphasizes that work experience is even more valuable. She jokes about her unusual journey, but admits that working as a paralegal or an outreach worker are great examples of more traditional preparation for this career path.

Detamore says that the part of her job she enjoys most is talking with students. She loves motivating others and is encouraged by young people's interest in advocacy. Seeing the development of social consciousness in her children and those she interacts with is what, for her, makes all the hard work worth it at the end of the day.

-Heidi Jutsum HC '06 and Alicia VanOrman BMC '05