

Law Statement of Purpose

Sitting at the negotiation table, I felt a weight off my heart when a co-operation agreement was finally concluded after four rounds of tough negotiations between the South Korean company I work for and China's second largest auto group. This reminded me of the scene two years ago in the courtroom of Shanghai District Court that I won a tough trial against a Chinese trademark squatter, representing a Japanese sewing machine company to defend their cherished brand when I was working for LungTin law firm. These are two snapshots of my past five years serving foreign enterprises in China and South Korea. My experiences as both a law firm associate and an in-house counsel have afforded me a profound understanding of lawyers' roles in cross-border business activities. Now, I look forward to leveraging these experiences to enrich my legal studies in Columbia's LLM program.

Six years of legal studies at one of the oldest universities in China enabled me to cultivate a solid legal knowledge base and effective research skills. I passed the bar examination much earlier than my peers and both my Bachelor's and Master's theses were ranked as excellent. One of my essays regarding trade remedy issues was published by the Beijing WTO Affair Center. More importantly, my strong interest in international business law convinced me to devote my efforts to this legal field in future practice.

After graduation, practicing as an associate attorney at a leading IP boutique law firm firstly exposed me to one of the key issues in international business: protection of intangible assets. As the managing partner's assistant, I have had the opportunity to be directly involved with a large amount of complex and challenging litigations and arbitrations involving IP infringement and unfair competition associated with large multinationals. I remember many nights where I buried myself in towers of files trying to figure out a good litigation strategy, and many long busy days of back-to-back meetings trying to negotiate a settlement. These experiences significantly enriched my practical legal skills and taught me to think more critically. My foreign investment consulting work introduced me to many different types of foreign companies. I realized that middle-sized and small foreign companies that lack experience with overseas investments and support from a mature legal department are more easily exposed to legal risks and are particularly vulnerable when dealing with changes in laws and policies. Becoming aware of this made me feel responsible to help these foreign businesses better adapt to China's complex legal and cultural environment.

After I married my husband, a warm gentleman from South Korea, I moved to Seoul in May 2014 to start a new chapter of my life. There, I continued my exploration of international business law by serving as an in-house counsel for a leading local auto parts company that had a strong desire to penetrate the Chinese market. By closely cooperating with other departments to deal with a vast range of complicated legal issues, I assisted the company to quickly take root in the Chinese automotive market and begin generating profits within just two years. These years allowed me to examine Chinese laws from a foreign company's perspective. I realized that many current rules are imposing unnecessary obstacles for foreign investors. These rules can be improved to promote mutual benefits for both foreign companies and Chinese society. Last year, my essay regarding one of these issues was published by the National Development and Reform Commission. Through this work, I also expanded my business perspectives, which led me to consider the long-term impacts of transactions and generate more commercially feasible legal advice.

My work also required me to get highly involved in communications between the company I work for and Chinese authorities and customers with respect to contract negotiations and settlement of disputes. In many circumstances, I found that the underlying cause behind these legal problems and disputes was a lack of understanding between different cultures. This made me appreciate the importance of an international business lawyer's ability to defuse culturally-based conflicts by having a deep understanding of the cultures of both sides.

Today, my strong desire to advance my knowledge of international business law and to deepen my understanding of western cultures has led to my decision to pursue further legal studies via a top-ranking LLM program. What I learn in an LLM program will upgrade the quality of my legal services to foreign companies by improving my global awareness and soft skills in dealing with legal issues in cross-border business. Increasing my awareness of western cultures will also enhance my abilities in dealing with culturally-based conflicts, especially those associated with clients from English-speaking countries. I believe Columbia's esteemed LLM program best suits my needs for several reasons. Its efforts on promoting law students' commercial awareness and its innovative teaching approach integrating business ingredient into law courses will strengthen my ability in offering effective legal strategies to help clients achieve their business goals and give me the opportunities to explore many interesting business law issues that I may encounter in future practice. In addition, Columbia's flexible course selection policy allow me to take Business School's courses, which will help enrich my knowledge and overall understanding of cross-border business activities. I am also particularly interested in attending Columbia's distinctive Negotiation Workshop to polish my skills in commercial negotiations and disputes settlement, especially with counterparts from different cultural backgrounds.

After completing the LLM program, I will return to China and practice at a leading international business law firm and I will particularly focus on foreign investment and corporate governance field. I will continue targeting my services to foreign companies, especially those middle-sized and small foreign businesses from South Korea and English-speaking countries. Forty years of development of foreign businesses has greatly contributed to China's economic take-off and social modernization. Recently, with the emergence of local businesses and an increasingly rigorous legal environment, foreign businesses are facing unprecedented challenges. As a local lawyer dedicated to practicing international business law, I feel the burden of responsibility to contribute my efforts in helping them ride out this important transition period and promote improvement of Chinese laws and regulations in this part. What I learn in Columbia's LLM program will make me better prepared to skillfully navigate these upcoming challenges and changes in the future.

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