

From Nakamura's perspective, CSUEB is an ideal launch pad. "This is a first class education," he says, emphasizing that the instruction he got as an undergraduate prepared him to do more than simply get a job, it put him in a position to succeed in the competitive legal world.

And how did this California native end up in Salt Lake City? His career began while still a student at then-Cal State Hayward, working in the Alameda County Public Defenders Office as an investigator. When he decided to attend law school, he chose to enroll at the University of Utah, then remained in the state where he ultimately made his career. Nakamura built a reputation through high profile cases prosecuting special victims crime, like domestic abuse and sexual assault, from 1993 to 1999 and representing private clients in his own practice for another 10 years after that. Sim Gill, the current D.A. for Salt Lake County, personally asked Nakamura to join his administration in 2011.

Utah's terrain had been a huge draw when he applied for law school, Nakamura is quick to admit, with plenty of snow for winter ski trips and lakes for fishing. But it proved an ideal location for work, too, since opportunities for weekend escapes are extremely important to keeping one's sanity in a demanding career like the law, he points out.

It's not only the workload, though that's certainly substantial, he says. Working as a prosecutor is emotionally intense. Over the years, he has seen abuse, violence and lives destroyed, and he's had to investigate them in detail. "Criminal justice is full of human stories and relationships. At its essence, it captures the best and worst of humanity," he told the students.

And while he says there's no other way to pursue justice, those who work in the field need to recognize the challenges and "bring some of you home at the end of the day." That's one of the many reasons support from his family has been so critical to his success, he says, and why he named the scholarship for his parents, who supported him unconditionally.

"Through me, they have contributed so much to the field of criminal justice," he says. "They're most responsible for what I've given to society."

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