After earning a bachelor’s degree in forensic chemistry, Joseph Handen continued his education and completed a master’s degree in analytical chemistry with an emphasis on protein misfolding and RNA melting at the University of Albany, State University of New York (SUNY). During his graduate work at SUNY Albany, a lecture on the importance of intellectual property in research introduced him to the field of patent law. Realizing that Notre Dame’s unique Master of Science in Patent Law (MSPL) program would allow him to combine his academic strengths and his passion for learning new things, he quickly decided to enroll.

Handen was excited to join the program. He explained, “The program includes lectures, workshops, and a capstone project which built a strong foundation of knowledge and real hands-on experience with tasks I will be performing as a professional. Additionally, the classes are all taught by registered practitioners, which gave me a wide range of perspectives on many aspects of patent law and procedures.”

Currently continuing his work in the field, Handen works at the Notre Dame Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship Clinic, drafting provisional and non-provisional patent applications, responses to office actions, and patentability opinions for the clinic’s supervising attorney. The intellectual property and entrepreneurship clinic provides students with valuable experience in applying substantive intellectual property law to client problems, and offers assistance to local businesses and entrepreneurs with counsel on intellectual property-related issues. Students work under the close supervision of the clinic director, Jodi Clifford, a patent attorney with substantial private practice experience.

The MSPL program is a one-year program that prepares scientists and engineers to pass the patent bar exam and practice as registered patent agents. The curriculum combines the fundamentals of patent law and practice, continuing studies within a student’s scientific or engineering specialty, and practical, hands-on experience.