Barbara Erlandson '87

Describe your work:
I enjoy working with individuals and families from around the world who are seeking temporary and permanent status in the United States. This includes helping people apply for a variety of nonimmigrant and immigrant visas and helping seek relief from deportation. It’s rewarding to help individuals navigate the often complex and intimidating immigration system. It’s exciting to help people achieve their dream of living and working in the United States. It’s gratifying to bridge language and cultural barriers and directly impact people’s lives by helping them legalize their status in the United States. When there are negative changes to the immigration laws, the direct impact on families can be devastating. Similarly, when positive changes occur, the impact on individuals and families can be life-changing.

What is commonly misunderstood about your work?
There is a lot of misinformation about current immigration laws and about immigrants in general. For example, people often erroneously believe that the law has changed when, in fact, Congress is merely debating proposed legislation. Moreover, people often misunderstand how easy or difficult it is for an individual to immigrate to the U.S. and why people choose to come to the U.S. The effect is that it can take a lot of time to dispel rumors and clarify misinformation. The immigration debate has become very heated in recent years and especially in recent months. A positive impact of immigration being in the news is that people get involved in advocating for positive immigration reform.