

TOP TEN QUESTIONS WE HAD AS FIRST YEAR LAW STUDENTS

Drop by and we'll answer yours!

(1) How do I get a job?

Well, in good legalese--it all depends. Do you know the area of law in which you want to practice? Do you want to work in the public or private sector? Do you want to stay in Sacramento or explore another part of the state or country? Can you afford to volunteer? Do you have family or friends who are in a position to hire you or direct you to someone who may?

There are many ways to find a legal job regardless of how you answered the questions above. Attend "A Day in the Life" presentations to learn more about specific practice areas and practice settings. Ask us questions and we can help you identify your options and ways to reach your goals. Drop off your resume or cover letters to be reviewed, and make an appointment with a Career Advisor to discuss job search strategies, or see if you've missed a resource in the office. You can also utilize McGeorgeCareersOnline, accessed via the McGeorge website, to review available job listings.

(2) What is OCI?

On-Campus Interviewing. It's an opportunity in the early Fall of your second and third (2D/3E and 3D/4E) years to drop resumes for employers who are coming to campus to interview students. Most of the employers are large law firms that "prefer" students with strong academic records, excellent legal writing and research skills, journal and moot court participation. That does not mean other skills and experiences are not important, or that you won't get a job if you're not in the top ten percent of the class (remember that's only about 25 of you anyway). There are also a number of other employers who participate in OCI. However, most public interest, government agencies and smaller private practices do not know what their hiring needs will be until the spring.

(3) All my friends ask me if I'm interested in transactional law or litigation. How do I decide (and what does that mean anyway)?

In litigation and in trial practice, you'll be working on lawsuits and you'll spend a lot of time preparing to be in court. Transactional law, on the other hand, involves just about everything else. You'll be drafting and negotiating contracts, advising clients on statutory and regulatory compliance, making and negotiating business deals, advising on tax returns and tax consequences of business deals and business formation, among other things. To help you decide, you need to talk to attorneys practicing in both areas and try to get some experience.

(4) How do I decide what area of the law I'd like to pursue?

There are many ways to go about this process, and you should pursue them all. **First**, be curious and ask every attorney you meet to tell you about his/her practice area. Ask such questions as "What do you do on a daily basis? What do you like/dislike about it? What preparation did you have for this particular area? What future do you see for this area?" You can ask questions informally, request an informational interview, or attend one of the "A Day in the Life" speaker series panels to ask your specific questions of an attorney. You should also take advantage of our informal Alumni Mentor network by contacting alumni in the practice and geographic areas that interest you.

Second, gain some actual experience in this area, even for a few hours a week as a volunteer, if necessary. You can also seek out clinical opportunities in a specific area. A particular area may seem very interesting, even glamorous, until you actually spend some time observing it closely and discover that it involves many hours of work that you don't enjoy. **Third**, read all you can about this area. **Fourth**, come to the CDO and investigate our resources which will give you a thumbnail sketch of many practice areas.

(5) Who can help me?

There are several people in the CDO who are eager to help you find the job that's right for you. If you read over the staff biographies, you may find someone who has experience or knowledge about certain areas of the law that you may be interested in. If not, just ask one of us and we'll get you the information you're looking for. *Don't overlook another major resource on campus: your professors.* By contacting a professor about insights on the legal market you are also letting him or her know that you appreciate faculty opinions and show that you are being smart in your job search. Knowing who you are and your career goals will make the faculty more willing to act as a reference for you.

(6) How important is it for me to get legal experience this (2010) summer?

Relatively important. Gaining legal experience your first summer can be helpful for a number of reasons. First, your initial experience will help you move toward a legal focus. You'll have a better idea of what legal setting you might prefer (i.e., public interest, law firm, government, etc.). Second, some employers like to see some sort of legal experience on your resume. This is especially true for students who come to law school without solid prior work experience. However, studying abroad or doing non-legal work your first summer are also appropriate uses of your time. To explore your options and see what you should be doing next summer, meet with a career advisor to discuss your individual concerns and goals.

(7) When should I start my summer job search? When should I give up?

You should start preparing for your job search NOW by networking, researching employers and developing a good resume and effective job search letters. If you want to get legal experience this summer you should start contacting employers in the early spring and persist until you find a summer position which provides you with solid legal experience, paid or unpaid. Many first year students locate excellent positions very late in the semester or even early in the summer, so don't give up until mid-summer, if then.

(8) What's NALP? Why do we have to pay attention to their rules?

NALP stands for the National Association for Law Placement and is the organization to which all ABA-accredited law schools and most employers over the size of 25 attorneys belong. This organization sets forth general rules which employers and students agree to abide by in their hiring process. Although you may not like all the general principles, their existence makes life somewhat easier, especially for those advanced students going through OCI, by allowing both sides to know what to expect.

(9) I don't know anyone in the legal community. Should I mass mail 100-200 resumes as some of my friends are doing?

First of all, don't feel that you are alone in not having legal contacts. Most of your classmates probably don't either. You need to start generating contacts by talking to your professors, attending legal functions like Bar Association programs, McGeorge club activities, and such major events as the Public Interest/Public Sector Legal Careers Day. Talk to your friends, family, doctors, dentist, etc. about your interest in meeting practicing attorneys. In other words: Network! Come see a career counselor in the CDO to help you develop a long-range strategic plan of action. Second, "mass mailings" are generally a waste of time, paper and postage and mainly produce rejection letters. (Just think of all the "junk mail" you toss unopened!) On the other hand, a targeted mailing addressed to a specific hiring individual in organizations which have some specific interest to you may well open the door for you to meet new contacts. You'll get far better results than your friends who drop resumes from a helicopter.

(10) How much time should I allocate to job search activities?

This year you should spend a good amount of time developing your career focus and job search skills, with the same seriousness of purpose that you afford your academics. Once you've made the initial investment, smaller subsequent efforts will contribute to your focus and yield results.