



**Left, Right, Center: Advising Students on Political Activity and Issue Advocacy**

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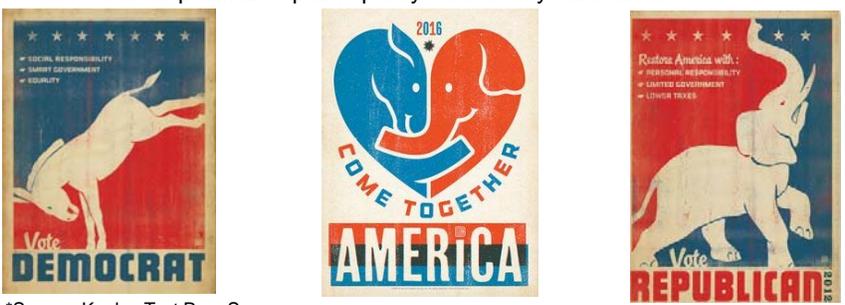


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## Introduction

- 87% of law school admissions officers reported the current political climate in the US was a significant factor in an increase in applications last cycle, and 30% describe it as a “very significant” factor.
- 45% of pre-law students say that the current political climate impacted their decision to apply to law school, up from 32% in 2017.
- Overall, 57% of those surveyed say they plan to use their law degree to advocate for political or public policy issues they care about\*



\*Source: Kaplan Test Prep Survey

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## What Activity Are We Talking About?

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- Partisan political activity
  - Campaign work
  - Legislative and policy work for an elected official
  - PAC fundraising and policy work
- Issue Advocacy
  - What “issues” are we talking about?
  - Which issues warrant discussion with a student?

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## Agenda

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- Advising students with political involvement/activism experience who want to work in the private sector.
- Advising students with political involvement/activism who want to work in the public sector
- Advising students who have not previously been involved in politics/issue advocacy and now want a career in the field.
- Simulation/Exercise

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## Private Sector

– I want to be attractive to as many employers as possible, regardless of whether they share my enthusiasm for activism.

OR

– If an employer doesn't want to interview me because of the campaign or issue I worked on, I probably don't want to work there anyway.



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## Resume & Cover Letters

Highlight transferable skills and characteristics employers seek in new hires.



- Manage competing priorities
- High pressure environment with tight deadlines
- Manage budget
- Communications and interpersonal skills—politics is about people!
- Advocacy skills
- Lobbying experience
- Organizing skills

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## Top 10 Foundations For Practice

Table 1: Top 10 Foundations Categorized as Necessary in the Short Term

| Percent Indicating Necessary in the Short Term | Type                    | Category                                 | Foundation  |
|--|-------------------------|--|---|
| 96.1%  | Professional Competency | Professionalism                          | Keep information confidential ★                         |
| 95.6%  | Professional Competency | Professionalism                          | Arrive on time for meetings, appointments, and hearings |
| 93.7%  | Characteristic          | Professionalism                          | Honor commitments ★                                     |
| 92.3%  | Characteristic          | Qualities and Talents                    | Integrity and trustworthiness ★                         |
| 91.9%  | Professional Competency | Emotional and Interpersonal Intelligence | Treat others with courtesy and respect ★                |
| 91.5%  | Professional Competency | Communications                           | Listen attentively and respectfully ★                   |
| 91.0%  | Professional Competency | Communications                           | Promptly respond to inquiries and requests              |
| 88.6%  | Characteristic          | Qualities and Talents                    | Diligence ★   |
| 88.1%  | Characteristic          | Passion and Ambition                     | Have a strong work ethic and put forth best effort ★    |
| 87.8%  | Characteristic          | Qualities and Talents                    | Attention to detail ★                                   |

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## Resume Example:

**DUVAL FOR GOVERNOR**, Phoenix, AZ

*Deputy Campaign Manager and Operations Director*

- Oversaw day to day operations of campaign.
- Managed campaign budget and staff.
- Briefed candidate on upcoming events.
- Coordinated with finance staff to help raise money.

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## Resume Example:

### DUVAL FOR GOVERNOR, Phoenix, AZ

#### Deputy Campaign Manager and Operations Director

- Exercised **stellar organizational, communication and interpersonal skills** to **develop and execute strategy** for reaching and persuading 3.5M voters, while also overseeing day to day operations of campaign.
- **Created and managed budget** of over \$3.75M. Effectively deployed financial resources to have maximum impact.
- Hired and **managed staff** of over twenty people from senior staff to interns.
- Operated in a **high pressure situation, under tight deadlines, with competing priorities.**
- **Maintained open lines of communication and effectively coordinated** with candidate, staff and volunteers.
- **Complied with all election and political finance laws** by training staff on rules, developing procedures for complying with rules, and completing and submitting campaign finance reports.
- Coordinated with finance staff and candidate to help make the **“hard asks”** of potential donors, effectively raising \$3.8M as a team.

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## Resume Example:

### PPHS Raleigh, NC

#### Field Organizer

- Worked on behalf of a 501(c)(4) organization to achieve **electoral goals.**
- **Partnered** with community, faith, political and other organizations to educate membership on issues surrounding women’s health.
- Clearly and effectively **communicated** PPHS’ message to members of the public and trained volunteers on how to communicate in an effective manner.
- **Recruited, trained, scheduled** and deployed over 200 volunteers over three months.
- **Advocated** for local community health centers funding **in the NC General Assembly.** **Developed relationships** with legislators from **both sides of the aisle.** Communicated PPHS’ message to these legislators, and framed/personalized the message in a way that resonated with values of each member.

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## How to know if your politics will hurt or help you...

The screenshot shows two web pages side-by-side. On the left is the RNLA Online Directory with search fields for Name, State, Practice Areas, and Law School. On the right is the OpenSecrets.org page for Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, displaying campaign finance data for the 2018 cycle.

| Money to congressional candidates: 2018 Cycle |          |
|---|----------|
| Dem's   | \$86,521 |
| Repubs.                                       | \$14,100 |
| Others  | \$0      |
| Incumbents                                    | \$24,421 |
| Non-Incumbents                                | \$76,200 |

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## Interviewing

- Focus on aspects of prior work that display transferable skills
- Give truthful and genuine answers. Never lie.
- Frame answers as innocuously or generally as possible.
- Then PIVOT.

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## Interviewing

Q: I see you worked for Senator X's campaign. Wasn't she the one accused of throwing away the voter registration applications she collected of people in her opponent's party?

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## I care about finding a job, I'll worry about politics later...

Truthful but innocuous.

Transferable skills/  
employable  
characteristics

PIVOT

A: I did work for Senator X's campaign. While she was accused of that, to my knowledge, it never happened, and in any case, I was always incredibly careful when I registered voters. What working on a Senate campaign like that taught me though was how important it is to pay close attention to detail, and be incredibly diligent in your work. I also learned a lot about interacting with the public. Speaking of which, do you get much of a chance to interact with clients on a daily basis?

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## If they don't like me because of my views, I probably don't want to work for them...

A little stronger  
language.

A: I did work for Senator X's campaign, and those charges were entirely unfounded. I'm proud of the work that I did on that campaign, and know that I was trained to always handle our voter registration with the utmost care. In fact, I registered a lot of voters, and my favorite part of voter registration was getting to interact with the public—I really gained a lot of interpersonal skills that I hope I'll be able to use in practice. Do you get a large amount of interaction with your clients on a daily basis?

Transferable skill/  
employable  
characteristic

PIVOT

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## Interviewing

Q: We defend a lot of high profile criminal defendants, many of whom are accused of heinous crimes and potentially face the death penalty. How do you feel about the death penalty?

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## I want a job, I'll worry about politics later...

Truthful and uncontroversial.

Highlight skill/characteristic

PIVOT

A: Regardless of how I personally feel, for better or worse, the death penalty is currently the law, and we have to deal with it. More importantly, I'm dedicated to doing the type of thorough and diligent job needed to defend my clients and ensure the government meets their burden of proof for any crime, no matter the potential sentence. What percentage of your cases would you say are these more serious felonies, versus less serious felonies and misdemeanors? Do you get many white collar clients?

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## If they don't like me because of my views, I probably don't want to work for them...

Stronger (probably unpopular in this setting) statement

Highlight skill/characteristic

PIVOT

A: Generally speaking, I do believe there are some crimes so terrible that a sentence of death is appropriate. However, I think the most important thing is to make sure that regardless of the crime or the potential sentence, the government is obligated to meet their burden of proof, and that every defendant is afforded all of his or her rights. I'm committed to working diligently on behalf of all my clients, regardless of the potential sentence. Most of the high profile defendants I've heard about recently have been white collar. Do you have many white collar clients?

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## Public Interest Sector

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- Evaluating the student's career objectives
  - Understanding the difference between legal services delivery and policy work, and the relevance of political and advocacy work to each student's objectives
- Discussing the student's political activity
  - What was their involvement?
  - How deeply committed are they to a party or cause?
  - Did they "volunteer" or did they "organize"?

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## Public Interest Sector

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- Considering the organization or political party
  - How relevant is the experience to the employer?
    - Risk vs Reward of including the experience
  - How "incendiary" is the organization likely to appear to the potential employer?
- The Strategy of Public Interest and Policy Work
  - Advising on short- vs. long-term career objectives

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## Counseling the Inexperienced Advocate

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- **Start with Basics**
  - Focus on what you *do* have
    - Draw parallels with other advocacy experiences
    - Develop narrative of law school as a pathway
      - » Advocacy skills
      - » Critical thinking skills
      - » Credentials
  - Elevator pitch is key
    - For entry level, enthusiasm counts
    - Develop soft skill competencies
    - Make sure that passion shines through

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## Being Less, Becoming More

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- **Show me the experience**
  - Student Groups
  - Clinics and other experiential/school based opportunities
  - Cybervolunteering
    - Phone Banking
    - Social Media
  - Issue focused special note
    - Understand the big picture
      - » Support of one issue might mean support of all issues to a potential employer
- **Buyer's Remorse**
  - Time might heal all wounds, but politics are forever

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## CASE STUDY #1

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- A 1L student applies for a summer position with a small civil rights firm that represents Planned Parenthood. The student has no political activity on his resume. In a career counseling session, the student explains that his interest in the firm is primarily due to its representation of Jim Obergefell.
- The student is offered, and accepts the position.
- The student is subsequently elected President of the law student chapter of the Federalist Society. The firm (somehow) is informed of this, and rescinds its offer.
- What are the lessons for the student? The career counselor?
- What is the conversation with the firm?

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## CASE STUDY #2

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- A summer position becomes available for a 2L, drafting policy and advocating for state and federal legislative initiatives related to reproductive rights.
- The student has a decent amount of volunteer experience. Most significantly, she has served for eight years in various capacities at her Catholic parish.
- The student, married with three children, has donated for years to pro-choice causes, yet remains dedicated to supporting the Church as a volunteer.
- Her grades, journal experience, federal judicial externship, and prior work experience make her a strong candidate for this position, but she seeks your advice on this issue.

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## CASE STUDY #3

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### Job Posting:

*The Lake Norman office of Arnold & Smith, PLLC seeks an associate attorney for family law and civil litigation matters. Ideal applicants would have 0-2 years of experience. Compensation based on qualifications and includes a competitive benefits package. Ideal candidate will be outgoing, self-starter with a knack for problem solving and critical thinking. Inquiries held in confidence if requested.*

Your student wants to apply. She has the following experience:

- Deputy Campaign Manager, Stacey Abrams for Governor
- Field organizer, Sierra Club.
- President of the American Constitution Society in law school.

Help her formulate some bullet points for her resume that will make her an attractive candidate, based on some of the transferrable skills mentioned today.

## Summary

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- This is ultimately an extension, or subcategory, of the “personal branding” discussion with students.
- Big picture lessons we hope to impart to students:
  - Be aware of the impact of your activity
  - Be strategic in presenting yourself

## Contact Information

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