THE NEW OCI: HYBRID/FAST MODEL

While some things change, others remain the same. This new era of recruitment requires law school career services to be nimble, while ensuring we continue to provide high quality advice and guidance to students. Use these tips to ensure your interview program is efficient and successful.

THE PREP

- ☐ Decide dates and format. Communicate details to employers as soon as possible. (Don't worry about getting employer input.)
- ☐ Separate virtual and in-person interviews by day or week.
- ☐ Communicate grading and recruitment policies to employers up front and throughout the process.
- ☐ Build in time for application material review if possible.
- ☐ Confirm and reconfirm schedules by time zones.
- ☐ If hosting the interview platform, offer demos to recruiters and students.
- ☐ Have a plan for offering quiet spaces for students to interview virtually.

THE SIMMER (BIDDING & SELECTIONS)

- ☐ Repeat all policies when application materials are sent to employers. For in-person interviewing, communicate campus policies re: Covid precautions.
- ☐ Consider allowing cancellations for any reason up until the day before or day of interview, especially for virtual interviews.
- ☐ Set student expectations:
  - Provide historical data, i.e., % of students who secure jobs through OCI.
  - Help students determine their "odds," with GPA ranges or by noting which employers are typically more selective.
  - Encourage students to apply directly to employers not participating in OCI.
  - Prepare students for last-minute changes in schedule times and interviewers, and what to do in the event of technical difficulties. For in-person interviews, provide guidance re: Covid precautions, knocking, and whether to shake hands.
  - Counsel students in advance re: declines, cancellations, and managing offers.
- ☐ If managing the interview platform, communicate to firms in advance what to do in the event of technical difficulties and who to contact with any changes.

BON APPETIT! (OCI & BEYOND)

- ☐ Have at least one dedicated staff member for technical difficulties and last-minute changes. Communicate who that person(s) is(are) to employers and students.
- ☐ Try to get feedback/outcomes in real time from employers and students.
- ☐ Watch for unsuccessful students and request feedback from employers early so the student can course-correct before the process is finished.

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS: HYBRID CALLBACKS

It comes as no surprise that things we took for granted in pre-Covid interview scheduling are no longer a given. Your firm might have had a standard interview format and timetable each day, and scheduling candidates ran like clockwork. Now, Covid considerations and an increased comfort level with virtual interviewing are changing the game. As you determine how to build your 2022 callback process, we provide a few thoughts for your consideration.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE. Take the time to envision yourself as a candidate on the day of a callback with your firm, and walk through their experience step-by-step. New elements:
- Covid-19 screening to be completed before entering the office?
- Will your interviewers expect candidates to shake their hands upon meeting? Communicate office norms in advance to both parties.
- Will lunch remain part of your interview schedule?

PROVIDE OPTIONS. Students may want to interview with you in person, while some may prefer to interview virtually in the interest of time. Offering both options will allow candidates to choose what they feel will provide them the best experience and best insight to your firm.

SCHEDULING. It may be a good idea to group virtual and in person interviews according to when interviewers are typically in the office. Depending on the norms in your office, you may pursue something like morning interviews in person, afternoon interviews virtual. Or, in person interviews on a few designated days each week, and virtual interviews on others.

BE FLEXIBLE. To the extent possible, have a plan in place to adjust interview formats in a way that is logistically smooth for candidates and interviewers. (E.g. Do you know certain members of your Hiring Committee are often in the office and willing to jump on an in-person schedule with little notice, if needed?)

COMMUNICATION IS KEY. Connect with your interviewers sooner rather than later – perhaps, before summer vacations and summer associate programs begin – regarding the landscape of this hiring season. Provide your scheduling plan as soon as possible to start the conversation surrounding interview availability.

INTERRUPT BIAS. As always, we need to be on alert to identify and interrupt biases. Communicate with your interviewers – perhaps with the help of an outside consultant, if appropriate – regarding new factors to keep in mind this year. If a candidate selects to interview virtually, or interviews in person but declines to go to lunch, for example, that should not be seen as an indication of their interest in your firm.

DAY-OF LOGISTICS. Prepare to be pulled in several directions simultaneously. The added element of interviews happening in multiple formats presents a new challenge. Do as much contingency planning as possible.
- Consider creating technology troubleshooting guides.
  - In the event of a technological issue and you cannot be reached, how should the interview proceed? (E.g. by cellphone? Who should call whom?)
  - Is it possible to bring one extra set of hands on deck (E.g. from your IT department) to assist with technology-related questions during callback season?
- If one of your in person interviewers is not able to come to the office, will you aim to find a substitute, or consider conducting that same interview virtually?

TAKING THE LID OFF THE OCI PRESSURE COOKER: COUNSELING CONSIDERATIONS

Advising tips for Career Services to maximize successful student outcomes.

☐ **LAY OUT THE FRAMEWORK**
From start to finish, let students know what to expect. For most, this is their first time.

☐ **MANAGE EXPECTATIONS**
Provide firm selection criteria to aide students in making strategic choices. This includes GPA ranges, number of applications and resulting interviews, and percentages of students who historically secure employment through OCI. Encourage direct applications to firms not participating in OCI.

☐ **PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE**
Encourage students to work one-on-one with a counselor to help identify which firms are reaches and within range, based on preferences.

☐ **ADVISING HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS**
Ideally top-level students are more selective at the bid/application phase. This requires a clear focus on their preferences, preventing a paradox of choice angst during interview phase. Results in a more open-field for mid-level students.

☐ **ADVISING STUDENTS WITH LOWER GRADES**
Help them identify and highlight mitigating factors: personal connections, pre-law experience, and rare skillsets. Encourage them to target and effectively connect with firms most likely to fully consider their application.

☐ **OFFER ALTERNATIVES**
Provide lists of smaller firms or suggest alternate pathways to students who are not selected for interviews.

☐ **ADVISING STUDENTS WITH FEW INTERVIEWS**
Encourage students to focus on their interview prep, including a mock interview. Help them focus on the quality of their interviews – not the quantity.

☐ **ADVISING STUDENTS WITH MANY INTERVIEWS**
Encourage cancellations where a student is certain they are no longer interested in each employer or market. Discuss their priorities and evaluate their options as they receive call backs and offers.

☐ **MANAGE THE TICKING CLOCK**
Stress the importance of making decisions and communicating those decisions quickly. This is the payoff for students sorting out ahead of time their priorities and doing research in advance of OCI.

☐ **SEIZE THE SHORT WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY**
Communicate with students and employers re: outcomes in real time. Seek feedback and communicate areas for improvement to students struggling while they can correct mistakes.