

COMPETENCY-BASED HIRING: LINKING ASSOCIATE DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCIES TO RECRUITING

Melissa Berry, Director of Attorney Development,
Perkins Coie

Lynn Herron, Assistant Attorney Recruiting Director,
Crowell & Moring

Jerry Organ, Bakken Professor of Law and Co-Director
Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions,
University of St. Thomas School of Law

Session Overview

- Introduction and Background
- The Evolution of Recruiting
- Principles and Goals of Integrating Competencies into Hiring
- The NALP Model as an Exemplar
- Challenges for Employers
- How can we do better?





Professional Identity Formation (PIF)

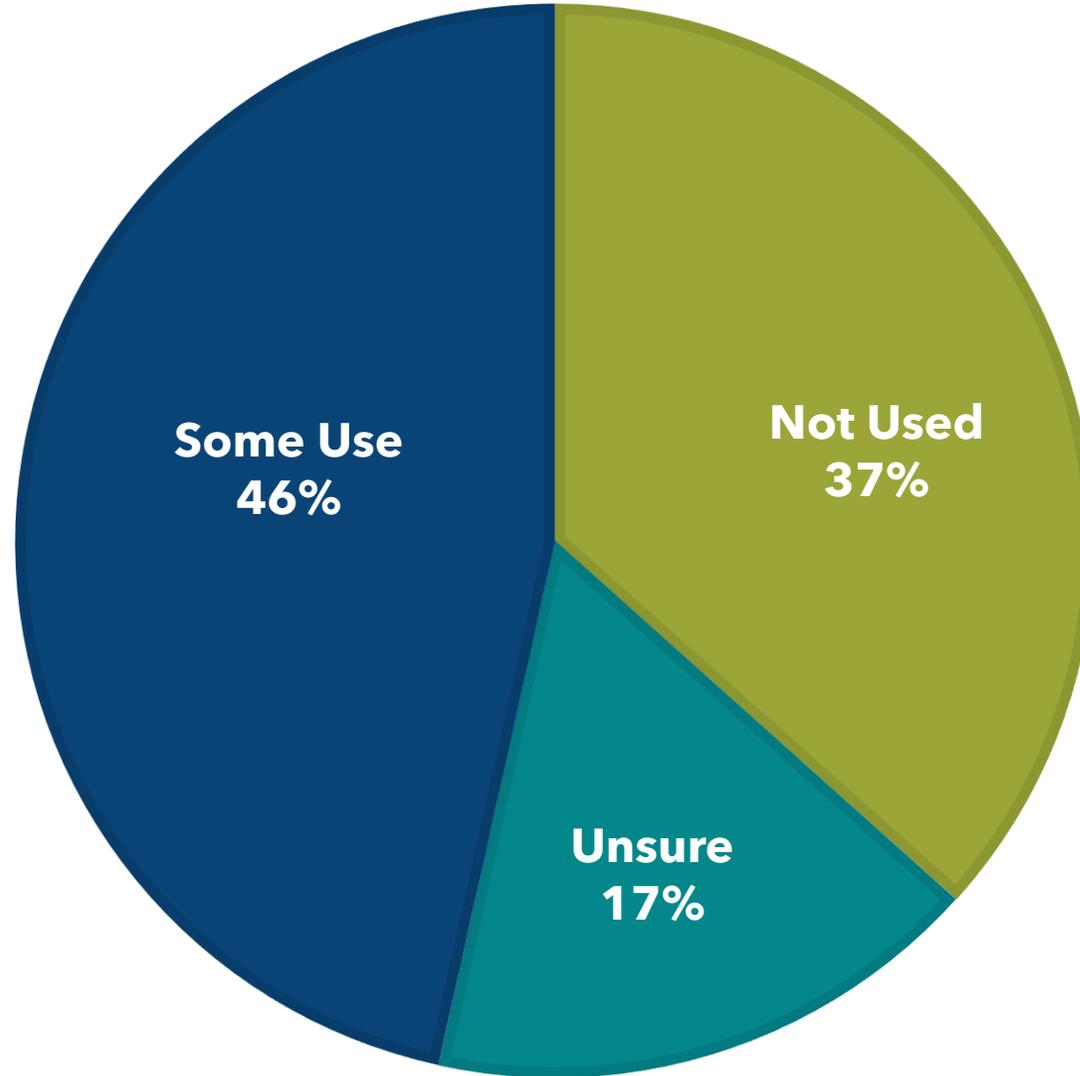
- Over the last 15 years - since *Educating Lawyers* - much more emphasis has been placed on the “third apprenticeship” of PIF
- Growth in learning outcomes focused on competencies such as self-direction, teamwork, cultural competence
- Growth in PD courses at law schools
- Revisions to ABA Standard 303(b) (3) and (c) in 2022 mandating opportunities for reflection on PIF and well-being across the three years of law school with particular requirements relating to racism, cultural competence and bias

NALP Research on Associate Competency Expectations

- Aside from traditional “law school” competencies, 90% of competency models included these 6:
 - Responsibility/Reliability
 - Initiative
 - Attention to Detail
 - Responsiveness to Clients
 - Understand Client’s Business/Concerns
 - Teamwork/Collaboration
- Little indication of use in hiring



DOES YOUR FIRM USE COMPETENCIES IN HIRING?





Greater Alignment is Needed

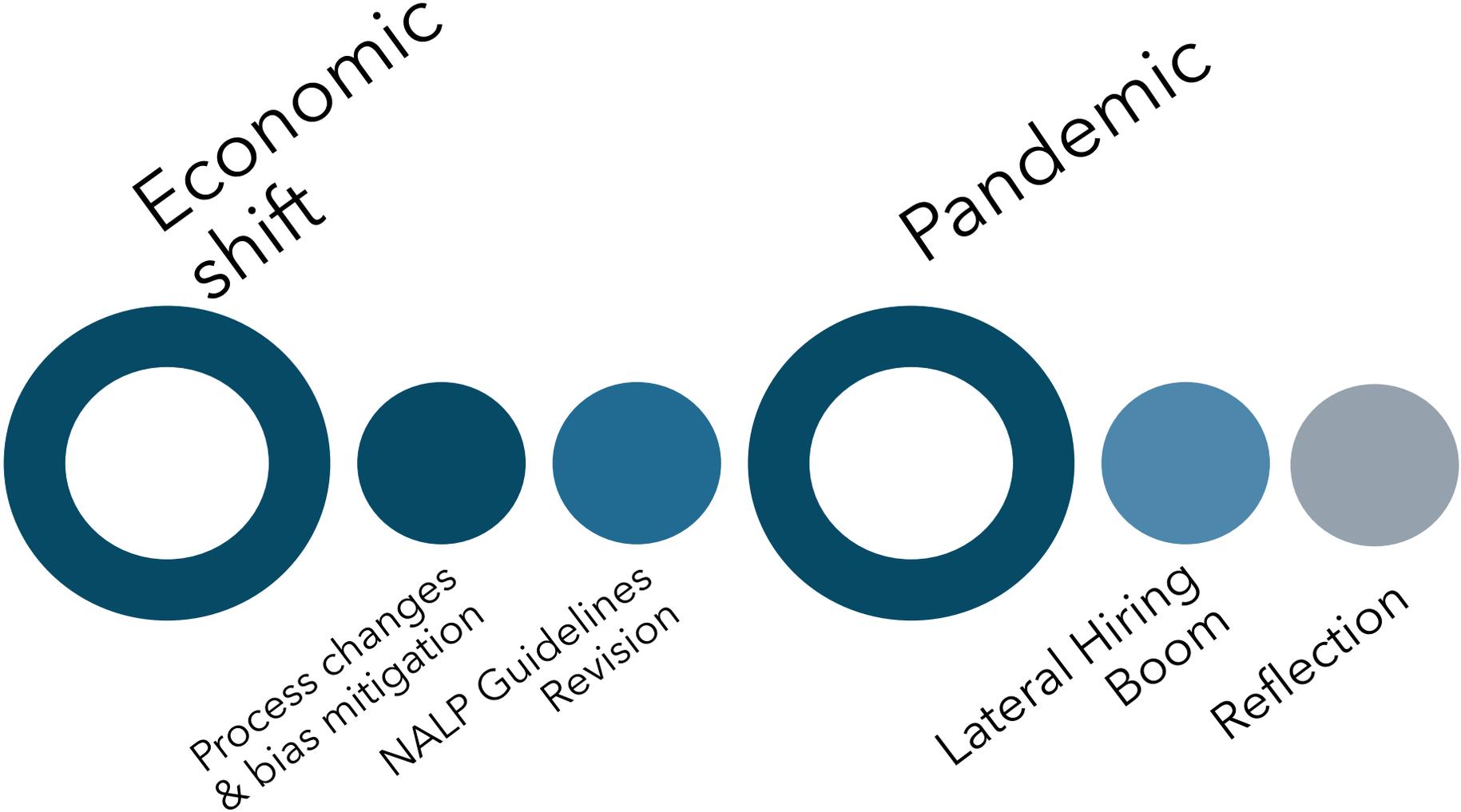
Law Schools

- Understand what competencies employers are looking for to ensure their graduates are ready for success.
- Normalizing PIF and competencies will ultimately help shift culture at their employers
- Teach students to ask about competencies and clarify expectations in summer positions and interviews

Law Firms

- The investment in each hire is more significant than was true years ago - less able to afford to be wrong.
- Integrating competencies in the hiring process increases odds of success
- Identification of new hires' competencies improves retention and development efforts

How Has Recruiting Evolved?





Current Status of Competency Integration

For those at law firms:

1. Does your firm integrate competencies into the **interviewing/hiring process for summer associates?**
2. Does your firm integrate competencies into the **summer experience/assessment for summer associates?**
3. Does your firm integrate competencies into the **hiring of laterals?**

Principles and Goals

Transparency

Consistency

Equity

Foster
Inclusion

Enhance
Retention

Others?

Case Study: NALP Leadership Model

Create Criteria/Competencies

Develop Model of Assessment and Decision Making

Train Decision Makers and Interviewers

Communicate Criteria/Competencies and Questions with Pipeline and Candidates

Consistent Use During Application Process



Case Study: Example Competencies



Case Study: Example Questions

Passion for NALP

Tell me what you learned about NALP while serving on a committee/task force. How have those experiences shaped your vision of NALP and how have they shaped your contributions to NALP?

Diversity & Inclusion

Describe how you have worked within your organization/community to promote and encourage diversity (including what the climate for diversity, equity and inclusion is at your institution). Discuss any successes and challenges you have faced and how you approached them.

Resilience

Tell me about a time that you adapted your approach to an issue in light of an unexpected change in circumstances or a professional setback.

Leadership

What leadership skill do you possess that would help navigate change in leadership at an organization? How have you used that skill to navigate any kind of change?

Communication & Collaboration

Tell me about a time when you collaborated with other NALP members (or work colleagues) with differing opinions. How did you help the group establish and promote consensus?

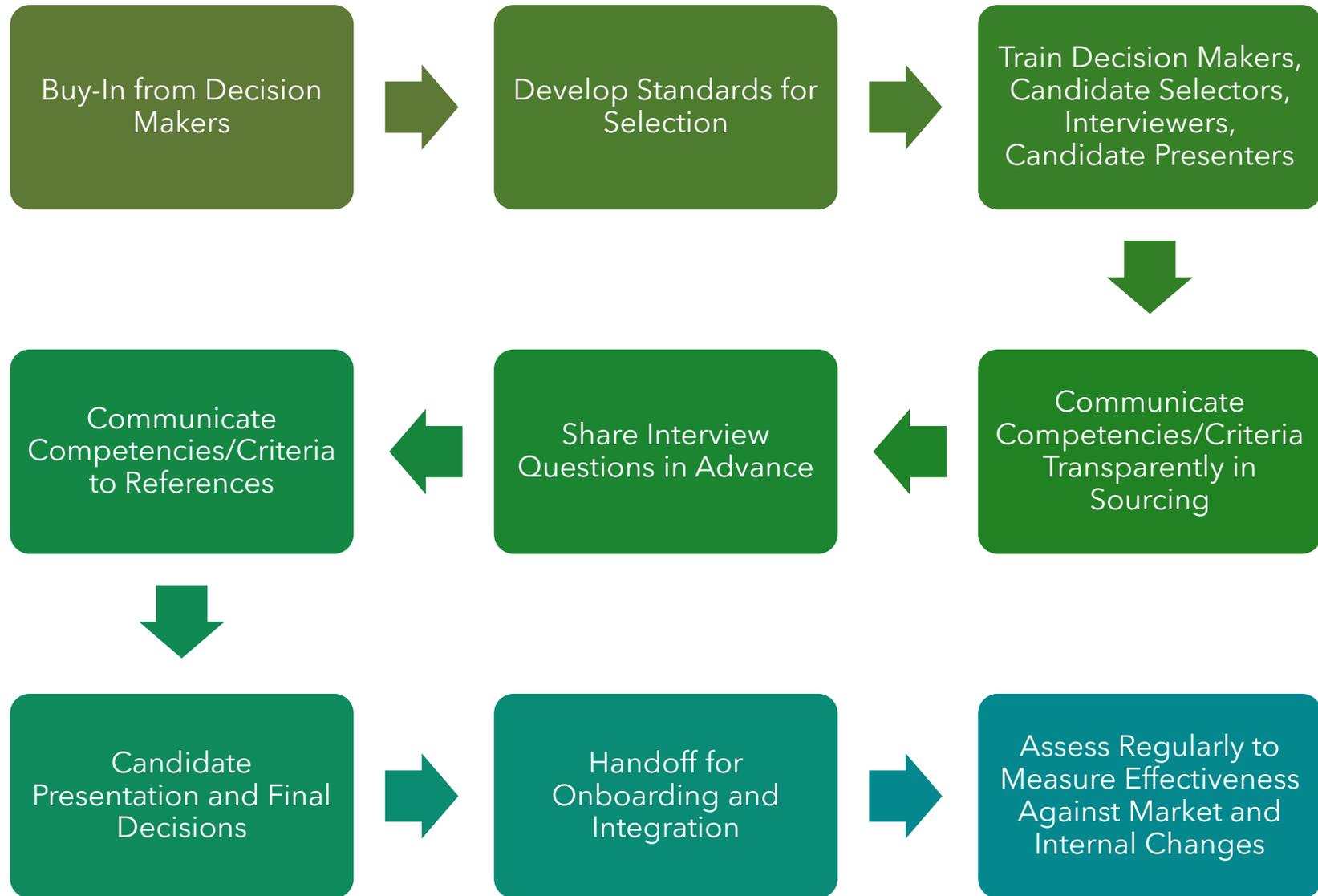
Efficiency & Organization

During your busiest time of year, how do you handle things that don't get done due to time constraints or other constraints? How do you prioritize demands?

Empathy & Emotional Intelligence

What are some things you have done to develop a good relationship with clients or coworkers, specifically when not able to be together in person?

Case Study: Communicate & Implement





Case Study: Outcome

Candidates

- Advanced Understanding of Position Expectations
- Thorough Responses to Interview Questions
- More Informed Decisions
- Positive Brand Experience

Employer

- Candidates Prepared for Position
- Advanced Assessment and Selection of Candidates
- Hires Invested in Mission/Values of Employer
- Enhanced Brand Awareness



What are you doing with Transparency?

What are you doing with respect to **transparency** in three key areas (law student hiring; summer associate program; laterals)?

- Are you sharing the criteria in advance with candidates?
- Are you integrating the competencies into candidate interviews and evaluations?
- Are you using competencies in your summer associate program evaluations and/or programming?
- Are you using competencies meaningfully in interviewing and hiring laterals?



What are you doing with Consistency and Communication?

What are you doing with respect to **consistency and communication** in three key areas?

- Are you using consistent and curated behavioral questions in interviews?
- Are you assuring consistent work experience that allows summer associates to demonstrate competencies?
- Are you offering programming to summer associates, new associates, lateral associates to reinforce the competencies?



How are you fostering Inclusion and Retention?

How are you coordinating recruiting and PD to foster **inclusion and retention**?

- Are you measuring competencies of new hires and preparing pre-arrival?
- Are you communicating knowledge to internal stakeholders about the competencies of the new hires?
- Are you closing the loop between recruiting and PD to connect what was learned from performance management and exit interviews?



Discussion: What Can Be Done to Improve Alignment Across

Entry-Level/Law Student Recruiting

Summer Associate Programs

Lateral Recruiting

Career Services



What Can Be Done to Improve Alignment: Law Student Recruiting

- Review hiring criteria and job descriptions
- Fostering connection between operational functions
 - Identify gaps in how we recruit
 - Revise/prepare evaluation forms for resume markers and interviews (how prepared are candidates?)
 - Communicate with colleagues about what they are seeing in first-year associates' development (particularly coming out of the pandemic)
 - Incorporate insights from summer performance evaluations and junior associate exit interviews



What Can Be Done to Improve Alignment: Summer Associate Program

- Foster connection between operational functions
- Present competencies in orientation
- Create training programs with growth toward competencies in mind
- Communicate criteria when launching assignment process to lawyers
- Confirm evaluation form provides feedback on criteria useful in the short and near term
- Offer opportunity for Summer Associate goal setting and self-evaluation
- Ensure offer decision includes assessment of areas for development in first year
- Share strengths and development areas with other teams in advance of first year



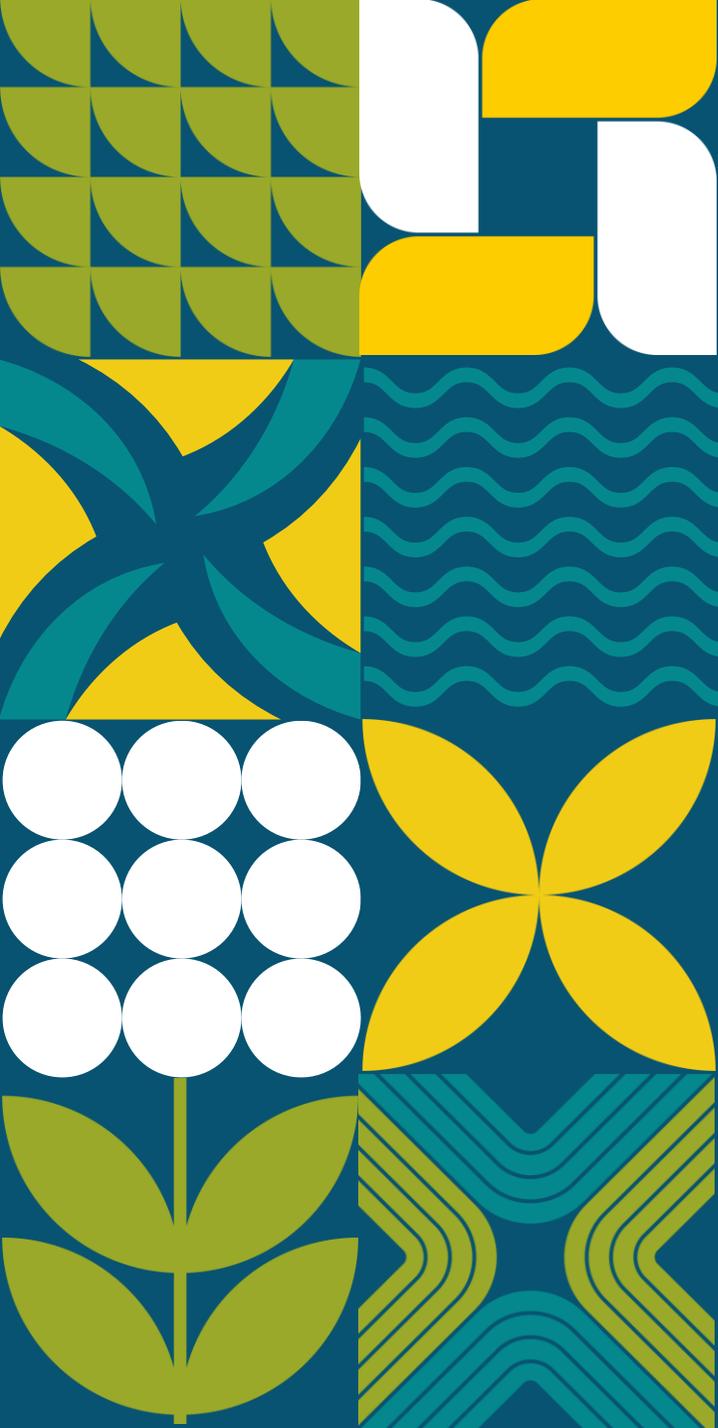
What Can Be Done to Improve Alignment: Lateral Recruiting

- Foster connection between operational functions
- Integrate key competencies for firm and practice group
 - Job posting
 - Interview questions
 - Performance and exit interview feedback loop
- Develop processes to verify competencies
 - Interviewer evaluations
 - References
- Alignment with “brand”



What Can Be Done to Improve Alignment: Career Services

- Prepare students: train students to know what competencies are
- Encourage students to demonstrate interest and ask questions about competencies in networking and interviewing
- Encourage students to reflect on how to demonstrate competencies and their own strengths and areas for growth



Melissa Berry
mberry@perkinscoie.com

Lynn Herron
lherron@crowell.com

Jerry Organ
jmorgan@stthomas.edu