Amplify Your Voice

2025 NALP ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

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Welcome

Teaching and Maintaining Professionalism When Students and Employers Behave Badly

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PURPOSE

Professionalism

- ➤ DEFINITION: the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person. See Merriam-Webster.
- ➤ Varies according to the environment/person.
- ➤ Defined differently based on background, experience, and exposure.
- ➤ Law school career services offices (CSO) must stay aware of personal and professional biases based on perceived professionalism ratings.

Goals

- ➤ Teach standard communication etiquette within legal community.
- ➤ Maintain professionalism when confronted with unprofessional behavior.
- ➤ Teach by example.

"When they go low,

we go high." Michelle Obama

DISCUSSION

Constituents

- ➢ Law students
- ➢ Legal Employers
- ➢ Faculty

Challenges/Issues

- ➢ Common challenges involving or created by unprofessional behavior
- ➢ Issues created or exacerbated
- ➢ Examples

Solutions

- ➢ Best Practices
- ➢ Gauging Success

Law Students

Challenges

- **Reneging on offers**

- **Law student does not fulfill internship requirements**
  - ➤ Fails to meet deadlines, quits mid-summer

- **Student distracted by OCI during summer position**

- **Social Media**
  - ➤ Student's viral video on bullying

- **Law student attending protest**
  - ➤ Law student participates in racial justice protest while working for a judge in violation of ethics
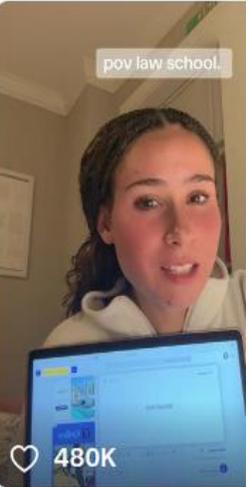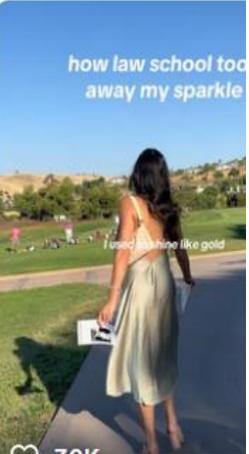
Law Students

Solutions

- **Back to basics**
  - ➤ Incorporate best practices, NALP ethical guidelines into orientation, advising session

- **Thank employer for reporting/raising**
  - ➤ Maintaining relationship, acknowledge challenge

- **Student 1-on-1**
  - ➤ Be direct re: *concerning social media or protest involvement*
  - ➤ Be compassionate: Listen/ensure student feels heard and supported
  - ➤ Encourage student to communicate with employer
  - ➤ Document and relay to admin

Employers

Challenges

- High turnover, highly punitive culture *(hiring and firing in short time)*

- Earlier hiring timelines

- Lack of pay transparency

- Public service employers not paying for summer interns

- Retention and setting associates up for failure (soft offers); tokenism, wanting a good fit for grads and employers
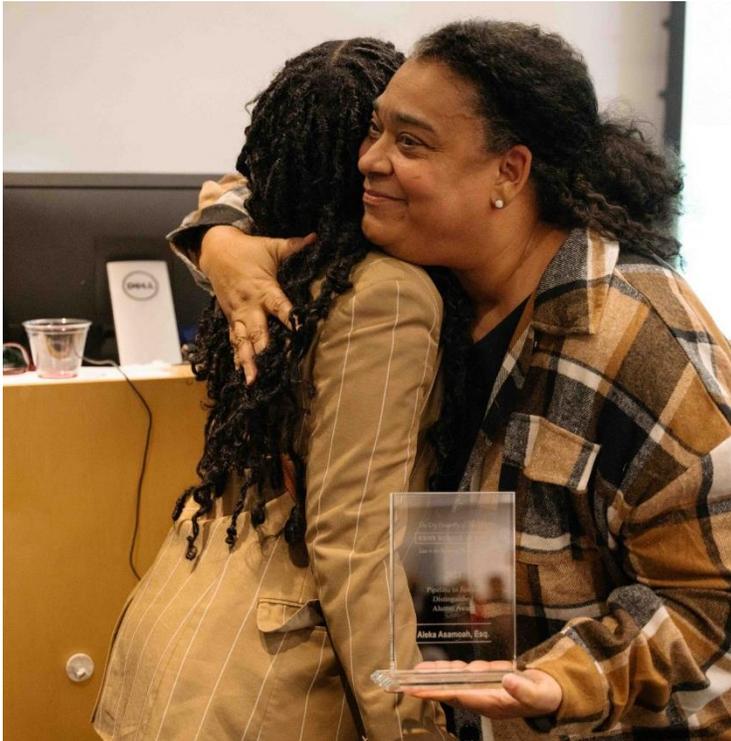
Solutions

- Communication and consequences

- Revisiting issue with employer

- Encourage and/or require greater transparency re: pay

- Ban from recruiting/posting for egregious behavior

Faculty

It Takes a Village

Challenges

- **Condoning bad behavior**
  - ➤ Connect students with another employer *after* student accepted offer
  - ➤ Encourage student protest without advising of pitfalls, *i.e. C&F, rescinding of offer(s), difficulty finding employment*

- **Erring on the side of employer/clients**
  - ➤ Student has conflict in legal clinic with supervisor, lack of communication/clear expectations
  - ➤ Faculty response reduce student credit, lower grade, C&F reporting
  - ➤ Students express overwhelm from law clinic

Solutions

- **Reiterate ethical guidelines to student** and document in student notes
- **Build strong relationships with faculty** and remind them of "big picture" *(students not always forthcoming)*
- Support students and **coach them on self-advocacy**

Questions ?

Contact

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Thank You