

Memorandum

TO: Lynne Traverse, Board Liaison, Experienced Professionals' Section
Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director

FROM: Bill Chamberlain, Chair, Experienced Professionals Section

RE: Quarterly Board Report

DATE: October 21, 2009

1) Environmental Scanning Calls

The Section held two environmental scanning calls on October 8 and October 14. The primary goals of these calls was get a sense of where employers and schools were in the wake of the OCI season and also to get the section members' feedback on the issues confronting the new NALP Commission. There were about 20 members on each call; more schools than employers and good mix of schools. In general, atypically, it was hard to get participants to participate. This is clearly a reflection of the times—very few folks were willing to go on the record, particularly on the employer side.

Notes about the Fall:

From the Employers:

The associates at one firm have revived the associates committee and the committee is planning a firm-wide associates' retreat. This effort was met with affair amount of cynicism but also positive feedback.

More firms have been trying the "Super Saturday" approach to callbacks with some success.

One East Coast firm: no deferrals, offers given right after the end of the summer program, and they visited the same number of schools as in previous years.

Some firms not adhering to 45-day rule and pressuring 2Ls to make decisions early—two weeks for some. Should there be a version of the NALP police?

Difficulties for 3Ls with no terms in offer letters. One firm has been telling its offerees that they will have more info for them after the first of the year as to salary and start date.

From the Schools:

Some schools have been using the new economic reality to focus on student wellness initiatives and self-assessment including encouraging intramural sports, creating binders of resources to hand students in appointments, and adding fun stuff to the office—a popcorn machine, a foosball table.

Programming for students on values assessment, networking, financial management, health insurance options.

Schools have also seen more students interested in exploring alternative careers: lobbying, non-profit management, teaching, consulting.

Second wave of offers seen by some on the school side: results in much longer time period from callbacks to offer for many more students than in the past.

Some evidence of students with “survivor guilt” coming into the office to share good news about offers since they cannot tell their friends.

Chowhounds idea at Hamline (suggesting to firms that pay for tables at charitable or bar association events to invite law students to dinner/lunch if there are open spots). Also setting up a “mentor by question” program in Symplicity.

Schools seeing more non-public interest students seeking public interest/government jobs—changes counseling for these students. Some schools suggest weighting OCI bids to favor the “true” public interest students.

Notes about the Future:

A few large firms are planning 1L summer programs.

Thoughts for the Commission (Betsy Armour, Sarah Staup, Polly Lawson and Irene Dorzback were on the calls):

OCI in the Spring would give schools more time to prepare students for the interviews but less time to work with those unsuccessful in the process. Having another semester’s worth of grades did not seem a big deal for some firms. Some firms felt that moving OCI from August would allow them to accommodate later start dates for summer programs. Moving OCI into September/October was favored by some (mostly employers). Such a move would make it easier to staff OCI interviews since attorneys would be back from vacation. Such a move would not work for schools given faculty opposition to interviews during class time. Everyone was encouraged to email Commission members and to make use of the NALP Suggestion Box.

2) EP/NP Work Group (Sarah Staup and Brian Lewis, Co-Chairs)

The “Ask the Experts” Conference Call Series hosted by the Newer Professionals Section held a call in September entitled “After the Offer: Closing the Deal Through Follow-Up” that was led by Susan Harlow at Paul, Weiss and Deb Ryerson. Thirty-two people attended that session. A November call entitled “Counseling Alumni” will be presented by Lisa Abrams and Leslie Hauser from the University of Chicago. A December call entitled “Law Firm Economics 101” will be staffed shortly. They are exploring the possibility of turning the December call into a webinar. This would allow for a recording of the session and much greater distribution/use by our members. Stay tuned!

Amy Perez from Nova reports that the series has been received with the general enthusiasm they have come to expect from the Newer Professionals group. They send out a survey immediately following each call, and attendees have commented that they enjoy the calls and find them to be informative. Lots of questions are generated which is always a good sign.

The EP/NP Work Group will again be hosting a “hot topic” roundtable event during a breakfast time slot at the Annual Conference in San Juan. The Group will also again be coordinating a conference mentor program.

3) Writers’ Work Group (Liz Peck, Ameer McKim, and Vicki Huebner and Gina Rowsam)

This Work Group has contributed a series of thoughtful and concise monthly Tips for Tough Times to NALPnow!

4) Retreat Work Group (Mary Hoagland, Chair)

Charge to EP Retreat Work Group

This work group (EP-RWG) is charged with considering and recommending programming for Experienced Professionals (EP) Section members and interested experienced NALP members for the 2011 NALP Annual Education Conference in Palm Springs.

EP-RWG Members

The work group members are Mary Hoagland, BYU, Chair; Elizabeth Armour, Suffolk; Karen Britton, Tennessee; Laurel Hajek, John Marshall; Gail Peshel, Notre Dame; and Marilyn Tucker, Georgetown. Lynne Traverse is the Board Liaison and William Chamberlain is the Experienced Professionals Section Chair, and both are active participants in the Work Group conference calls.

Background

This group reviewed the outreach and recommendations of the Experienced Professionals Work Group (2007 – 2008) and the Experienced Professional Retreat Work Group (2008 – 2009). Additionally, in Summer/Fall 2009 this group contacted more than 25 EP section members (and experienced professionals who have not joined the section) to determine if current member opinions and needs are different from or similar to past findings (due to the economy, changes in the recruitment landscape, or other factors). These factors and opinions were summarized and compared to data gathered since 2007 to make a thoughtful and timely recommendation. Feedback and suggestions from president-elect, Carol Sprague, and 2011 conference chair, Cherie Conrad, were carefully considered and form the basis of an alternate recommendation.

Member Outreach and Summary of Recurring Themes (a document containing the member feedback is attached to this report)

EP-RWG and other Section members asked more than 25 experienced employer and school members about preferred program formats, topics, speakers, and activities. The following themes recurred in conversations and form the basis for the recommendations offered.

- Enthusiasm across the board for a “mini – conference” on Wednesday, consisting of a general session on big picture topic for schools and employers, several time blocks with concurrent EP sessions, and a networking lunch (“conference within a conference with no extra fee is most attractive format”)
- Dedicated, high-level expert speakers (for example, non- NALP members who are “well positioned and influential consultants”) for plenary/general session would be a draw for conference attendance and add value.
- Interactive sessions should follow plenary/general session, so EPs can provide context and leadership through breakout/discussion sessions.
- Time together at the conference is critical to rejuvenate, generate new energy and ideas, and renew connections.
- High level programming for EPs can be scheduled within the conference parameters without sacrificing EP involvement in other important conference activities.
- “Cutting edge models for what we currently do” or “hot topics” such as the evolving nature of the recruiting industry and related challenges lend themselves to timely programming that will engage EPs.
- Program planners must be “nimble” to design cutting edge programming “just in time” for promotion to members (i.e., block the time in the conference brochure and supplement brochure with details on EP programming closer to printing deadline)

- Many EPs will attend the conference regardless of specialized programming for EPs, but others are looking for greater value to ensure their interest and justify attendance to their employers. An additional intended bonus of offering specialized programming is the possibility of recapturing disaffected EPs who no longer attend the annual conference.

Primary and Alternate Recommendations

Half-day mini-conference within the conference

The EP-RWG endorses a model including a general session on a big picture topic for schools and employers, several time blocks with EP concurrent sessions, and a networking lunch – a “conference within a conference” with no extra fee – as the most attractive format to EPs. Outreach suggests that this model will maximize interest and participation in the conference by this important membership segment. One member said that NALP “takes from, more than it gives to its experienced members,” and while the EP-RWG cannot evaluate how widespread it is, this opinion is not inconsistent with comments that led to the consideration of the EP experience three years ago.

EP Lunch and Concurrent Session

If a half-day mini-conference is not feasible, the alternative of a luncheon speaker with networking time followed by one block of EP concurrent sessions could meet many of the EP objectives, if carefully tailored. Certainly this work group respects the opinions of the current president-elect and 2011 conference chair, both of whom are EPs, who suggested a simpler model like this, rather than the proposed half-day mini conference.

5) Conference Planning Work Group (Christine Carlson, Chair)

The following programs proposed by the Section were accepted for the 2010 Annual Conference:

Emotional Intelligence for Leaders	Paula Nailon, Amee McKim
What’s holding you back? How can students and associates overcome barriers to success and move forward with their job searches and careers?	Diane Downs, William Chamberlain, Robert Kaplan
Change of Face: How the Recruiting Professional Can Help Ease New Hiring Partner Transition	Christine J. Carlson, Charlotte L. Wager, Leslie Ripley, Patricia Patrick
Reinventing Yourself: Changing Positions, Changing Employers, Changing Sides	Elizabeth Armour, Emily Leeson, Rachel V. Simmonds-Watson, Lynne Traverse, Tomea Mayer Mersmann
Legal Ethics & Professionalism	Brad Sprayberry

Hot Topic: Management Practices During a Challenging Economy	Speakers TBD - concept proposed by Gihan Fernando
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A proposal to once again have an Experienced Professionals Luncheon at the conference was also accepted.

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