

Memorandum

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

FROM: Bill Chamberlain, Chair, Experienced Professionals Section

RE: Third Quarterly Board Report

DATE: February 12, 2010

Given that the experienced professionals have been getting a true workout the past couple of months with their participation on the Commission on Legal Recruiting, the Strategic Planning Committee and the Nominating Committee, I really shouldn't even need to submit a report! ☺

1) Environmental Scanning Calls

The Section held two environmental scanning calls on February 4 and February 8. There were about 30 participants (more employers than schools) on the first call and about half that number (about evenly split between schools and employers) on the second call. On the whole, as in past calls, most participants were hesitant to speak, perhaps because we remain in such a time of uncertainty and change.

The first question for discussion involved what, if anything, schools were doing to assist first-year students in the wake of receiving first-semester grades. While there was not much response to this, the schools reported that students seemed less stressed about grades than expected, perhaps because they were the first class to enter law school post-crash and perhaps have more realistic expectations or at least were not surprised about how difficult the job search would be. One school is meeting with first-years in groups of eight to discuss job searching for the summer. One excellent idea that I will be sure to use in some future program: One career advisor identifies ten facts from her background and then goes fact by fact asking the students who share that fact to stand. By the end, all the students are standing—a powerful illustration of networking.

The second question was directed to the employers and dealt with how employers were reaching out to 1Ls in a time of reduced budgets. All employers stated that they were reviewing each opportunity carefully to maximize the contact between student and employer and to get “the most bang for their buck.” It seemed that fewer firms are holding receptions. Several firms hosted students from local schools for a day or a day-and-a-half of “shadowing” opportunities. Most firms engaged 1Ls by having their attorneys appear on panels at local schools. Firms noted an increase in 1L informational interviews--which they liked.

For a general question about the market for 2010, I led off with a statement that I thought things were busier at firms so far in 2010 but that hiring would be conservative through the summer and fall. No one seemed to disagree. Health care, bankruptcy and IP litigation all seemed hot practice areas independent of geography.

There was a helpful exchange on how to best get the word about a partner hiring need. And there was some concern among employer members about having to break out income from equity partners on the NDLE forms for this year. There was confusion as to why NALP wanted this info and some doubt as to how useful it would be to students. There was some thought that the breakdown was necessary for the completeness of data that might be of interest to outside parties. Each firm determines the income partner category differently. Some firms have decided to report the breakdown globally rather than office-by-office.

Finally, we discussed the Commission Report. We had Commission members on both calls who were able to outline the process post-comment period. There seemed to be agreement that a somewhat longer period for interviewing would be helpful in the evaluation of candidates and so the idea of an offer kick-off date appealed to most on the call. If the January date is adopted, a moratorium would need to be placed on recruitment activities during finals. All agreed that the 45-day offer response period should be shortened. One employer said that her firm would probably go to more schools if the season were lengthened by an offer-kick-off date. The thought of not being tied to one plan for the next few years was appealing. All agreed that flexibility would be the key to surviving the coming fall interview season.

I reminded the conference call participants to update their profiles on the NALP website.

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

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 to be coordinated by Elaine Petrossian (Villanova) and Nicole Vikan (Georgetown).

Once again, Brian Lewis is coordinating a conference mentor program (with help from Laurel Hajek (John Marshall) and Helen Long (Ropes & Gray)) and so far has more volunteers from the experienced professionals than requests for mentors. In part, this may be due to the fact that fewer newer professionals are able to attend the conference this year.

Finally, there will be a Newcomer’s Table staffed by experienced professionals on Tuesday at the conference.

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

This Work Group continues to contribute 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.

In our previous Quarterly Report, this Work Group asked guidance from the Board in regard to a proposed “mini-conference” for experienced professionals at the Annual Conference in Palm Springs. The response we received from the Board was that if a mini-conference were to take place, it would need to be held prior to the conference and with an additional fee attached. As an alternative, the Board suggested a lunch for EPs featuring a speaker and perhaps another EP-related program prior to or following the lunch. For several reasons, the Board did not support the Work Group’s original plan. Based on this feedback, the Work Group decided that a mini-conference held before the conference would not be feasible given the current financial constraints on our members and decided that the best use of the Work Group’s incredible talent, organization and drive would be to develop RFPs for the 2011 conference. The Group felt that by getting a head start, we would be able to give more thought to speakers and topics. The Group Chair, Mary Hoagland, has sent out an email on the experienced professionals’ listserv to generate ideas for these RFPs. As a sign of this Work Group’s dedication, they organized a breakfast at the AALS conference to brainstorm ideas for programs. The work of this group, and its incredibly diligent chair, Mary Hoagland, cannot be praised too highly.

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

The charge of this Work Group was completed as of the last Quarterly Report.

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