



Memorandum

Date: January 29, 2009
To: Norma F. Cirincione
Board Liaison, Experienced Professionals Section
From: Lynne Traverse
Chair, Experienced Professionals Section
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Re: Experienced Professionals Section Third Quarter Board Report

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This report describes the activities of the Experienced Professionals Section in the third quarter of the 2008/2009 NALP year.

Experienced Professionals Retreat Work Group (Leaders Karen Britton and Carol Sprague)

At the instruction of the Board, this Work Group became inactive this quarter.

EP/NP Collaboration Work Group (Leaders Joni Peet and William Chamberlain)

This Work Group continued preparation work for programming and events at the Annual Conference:

Mentoring

1. A roundtable breakfast featuring topic tables at which experienced professionals will be available to discuss specific and general questions relevant to the profession with new and intermediate professionals. Our topics have now been set (see attached) and Bill Chamberlain is in the process of recruiting experienced professionals to lead each table conversation.
2. We have discussed methodology and written a promotional announcement to encourage participation in small groups (headed by experienced professionals) to attend the Members Celebration Dinner and passed it along to Claudia Rizzo.
3. We have asked experienced professionals to sign up in their conference registration to be mentors. So far over 70 people have signed up to be mentors, which is an outstanding result. It looks as though many newcomers will take advantage of this opportunity. Brian Lewis and his work group team will begin specific assignments shortly so that mentors can connect with mentees prior to the conference.

Joint Interactions

Experienced Professionals are continuing to serve as experts on specific topics during Newer Professional “Ask the Expert” calls. Over 70 people joined the calls held during this quarter, which included the topics: “Promoting the Value of P.D. to Your Organization” and “Counseling Law Students in a Tough Economy”.

Writing Work Group - Bulletin Articles

Our Writing Work Group has gone through some changes due to the loss of leadership, unfortunately created by the economic crisis. I am pleased, however, to inform the Board that Kathy Grant, Director of Legal Recruiting at Keating Muething & Klekamp PLL in Cincinnati has stepped up to lead this Work Group. Kathy has several articles planned for upcoming bulletins, including “Employer Relations Perspective – Forging Relationships”, “Attitudes, Expectations and Visions: Momentum” and “Attitudes, Expectations and Visions: Creativity and Reflection”, authored by herself and Betsy Armour.

Talent and Interest Give Back Project

Given the challenges faced by our other work groups, I have only recently begun the process of soliciting leadership for this important project, which is particularly important as we move toward the second year of this Section. The goals will be to look at current member profiles and suggest additional questions and modifications to capture the interests and expertise of Section members. We also will be working on recommendations for outreach and tasks that will engage Experienced Professionals going forward. For this reason it is particularly appropriate to take up this task in the 4th quarter of the NALP year, giving the next year’s members exciting and interesting projects with which to engage.

Environmental Scanning

On Friday, January 23rd and Tuesday, January 27th, the Section engaged in conference calls to discuss environmental scanning. Present on those calls were a total of 19 law school and 17 employer representatives. The mood of both groups was decidedly somber.

Part V/Recruiting Season Wrap Up

I began the calls by asking for any final wrap up comments on the 2008 recruiting season, particularly any impact created by the new Part V timing guidelines. Members agreed that in the final analysis, the impact of the economy overshadowed Part V. Law School representatives reported that students were anxious, and were watching the blogs. Growing panic continued through December. Schools report that students now seem overly anxious when they haven’t received start-up information from their summer employers, a worry they have not observed in the past.

1L Hiring

1L hiring has been cut by all employer members who were present on these calls with the exception of Minneapolis, although employers report being bombarded by resumes from 1L students. Schools reported that fewer employers were registering for Spring OCI, and that 1L hiring was the first thing to go when cuts were considered. A school representative mentioned Spring OCI registration is 1/3rd the normal level. Another that there were no large firms participating with the exception of diversity hiring. Uniquely within this conversation, Oklahoma University has not seen any changes in the normal 1L (or other) hiring levels. Diversity recruitment efforts seem to be the major exception within this downturn and continue to remain active and vital. Externship programs and career service counseling are bursting at the seams and it is difficult to handle all the requests. One school reported they had proactively not discussed Spring OCI with their 1L class, assuming there would be a severe drop off and not wishing to raise anxiety even further. One Phoenix firm spoke about a 1L student who had arranged to have a professor oversee her work (without pay) for academic credit. There was a discussion that any firms approached with this idea should take a close look at their state's wage and hour laws for possible issues.

Changing Focus for Departments/Budgets/Summer Programs

Schools generally report budget cuts have been discussed but no implementation of staff layoffs or changes in services as yet. Many schools have initiated programs to assist alumni, such as special seminars conducted by university personnel and consultants. Career Services/Development at several schools are forming new collaborative teams with alumni offices and career advisors, sharing resources and presenting programming. Some programs described include "Career Planning;" "Managing Job Search Stress;" "How to Find a Job in a Tight Economy;" and one school plans to hold an alternative career fair featuring public and private job opportunities. Schools and employers are cutting back on travel budgets but many employers are in the midst of the budget process now, so it is unclear as to what the final impact will be.

Interestingly, outside of these specific conversations but relevant to this topic, the Experienced Professionals Section (and especially Jeanne Svikhart) has assisted Dena Bauman and the Solo and Small CSO Interest Group as they work towards creating a collaborative federal government job fair for their students in the Washington, D.C. area.

One firm described their quick reaction to the downturn, which included re-training some lawyers into different practice areas (real estate to restructuring, for example) and retooling business development training to include more junior lawyers than the firm had previously done. This firm also reported receiving multiple requests from alumni for job search assistance.

A number of employers are considering (or have already) shortened summer programs, and we heard from one who was thinking in terms of making sure summer events were "appropriate" within the context of the economic climate.

Participants on the call had not yet heard of rescinding of summer or new class offers, nor had they heard of many cases of delayed start dates as yet (it seems to be too early to tell what will happen).

Morale

Members discussed the challenges of keeping up morale among their staffs. On the school side, they are spending so much time listening to difficult stories (such as cuts in parents' investment funds usually used for tuition), there is a need to maintain the team/staff morale. Focusing on positive projects and taking small walking breaks during the day, looking forward, and celebrating the nation's new administration with a hopeful outlook are some examples of how members are working to keep up morale.

Each market reported hearing of at least one recruiting professional in their area who had lost their position.

Early OCI

Members asked for a discussion on how employers plan to handle the accelerated migration of schools to early OCI dates. Employer members stated they will be re-evaluating their schedules and will drop schools this year. Not enough lawyers are available in August to staff interviews at every school.

Economic Crisis

Unlike our calls at the end of October, there were only isolated "business is continuing as usual" comments from the group this time around. Schools are handling a larger volume of counseling requests with the same or less staff. A discussion regarding layoffs turned to the various options employers are considering (or have taken) to structure outplacement at their firms. One employer discussed her firm having offered 3 options at the end of 2007, including a period of partially paid leave (with the provision to "go do good in the world"); unpaid leave (unconditioned); and a buy out that offered full bonus, 4 months compensation and outplacement assistance. This option was popular, and 15 lawyers moved on successfully.

NALP Assistance?

Members on both calls discussed tasks/projects NALP might consider to assist the membership during this difficult time. Suggestions included:

Helping schools to pool beneficial resources on interviewing tips and outside-the-box job search tactics and/or offering regional programming on these topics;

Gathering resource materials for schools to access on how to work with search firms;

Gathering resource material on the ethics of job search and understanding search firm ethics – who is ethical, who is not, and how to tell;

Opening a forum for schools to discuss reciprocity for job boards – for example, equal access to job listings at all schools by lifting restrictive policies that may exist on web sites; and

Offering more discounts to members who have lost jobs.

Going Forward

During the coming quarter, the Experienced Professionals Section will spend time and energy preparing for our programs and events at the Annual Conference, place bulletin articles of interest to our members, and discuss projects of interest to our members.

In these difficult economic times, it is my belief that the Experienced Professionals of NALP could serve as a rational and stabilizing voice to the organization as well as a steadying hand to our younger members. I welcome any requests the Board may have regarding unique ways we could assist the organization membership, including implementation of some (or all) of the suggestions noted above.

Submitted for your approval,

Lynne Traverse
Chair, Experienced Professionals Section

cc: Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director

ATTACHMENT

ROUNDTABLE TOPICS FOR NEWER PROFESSIONALS & EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS:

Table One (Lynne Traverse):

How to Survive and Thrive in a Down Economy
Prioritizing and Project Management

Table Two (Sarah Staup):

Navigating the Associate Review Process
Internal Marketing to Firm/Hiring Partners

Table Three (Joni Peet):

Mastering the Recruiting Timeline
Communication Between Legal Employers and Law Schools

Table Four (Brian Lewis) :

Understanding and Managing Student Expectations
Counseling Difficult Students

Table Five (Christine Carlson):

Learning the profession as a non-attorney
As a law firm professional, understanding how law schools work and how best to reach law students

Table Six (Kim Fields):

Determining how to measure success as a CSO or a recruiting professional
Mastering the CSO timeline & getting into the flow of the seasons of career services

Table Seven (Jennifer Queen):

Gathering the data and stats necessary to track attrition and other associate evaluation programs
Navigating Workplace Politics

Table Eight (Jose Bahamonde-Gonzales) :

The Art of Budgeting
Supervising and Managing Staff

Table Nine (Gary Greener):

Navigating technology and all of the systems (OSCAR, Symplicity, etc.)
Career Services and Rankings

Table Ten (Bill Chamberlain):

Internal marketing and managing expectations of stakeholders: students, faculty, deans
Leveraging Faculty Relationships