

MEMORANDUM

TO: Timm Whitney, NALP Board Liaison, Experienced Professionals Section
CC: Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director
FROM: Yvonne Denenny
DATE: April 8, 2021
RE: NALP Experienced Professionals Section Board Report

Please find below a report of the Experienced Professionals Section's activities during the fourth quarter of the 2020-2021 NALP Year.

Updates

- **Annual Education Conference Planning / Bulletin Article / Webinar Planning Work Group.** Our vice-chairs *Jean Hadley (Perkins Coie)*, *Sara Murrell (Chapman University's Fowler School of Law)*, and *Heather Spielmaker (University of Kansas School of Law)*, have led the NALP Bulletin, Webinar and Conference RFP Process group. The Section has reminded EP members to start thinking of RFP ideas for the 2022 conference. Because the AEC is typically where a lot of great ideas are generated, it was stressed that it's more important than ever to connect with NALP friends and colleagues to submit RFPs.
- **Experienced Professionals/Newer Professionals Collaboration Work Group.** Through the leadership of *Katey Espinosa (K&L Gates)*, *Natalie Quinn (Fox Rothschild)* and *Sheryl Roberts (Smith, Anderson)*, the EPs reached out to the Newer Professionals Section to collaborate on any support for Newer Professionals that might be needed for the upcoming AEC, including for the Conference Newcomers Host Program.
- **Knowledge Management Work Group.** *Susanna Brennan (Miller Canfield)* and *Christine Whitehead (Goodwin Proctor)* are continuing the spearhead the review of content on the NALP website that's relevant to our members. For our latest update we provided the Knowledge Management Implementation Work Group Chair with our progress on the KM Inventory project at the end of January. Susanna and Christine also have offered to stay on as Vice Chairs for the next year to continue the work, if that's feasible.
- **Managing Your Own Professional Development Work group.** On April 6th, under the leadership of *Amy Mallow (Holland & Knight)*, *Kendra Brodin (Taft)*, and *Kathryn J. Ball (Ballard Spahr)*, about 60 members participated in the discussion event, "Our New Normalcy: Navigating Continued Transitions." In addition to polls, there were discussions by small groups of 4 or 5 members in breakout rooms as well as debriefs with the larger group. Topics included:
 - Returning to an office setting
 - Settling into another changed routine
 - Maintaining the balance some of us created while working from home

- Reclaiming balance that some of us lost while working from home
- Deciding what to keep and what to leave behind

When polled, members indicated mixed feelings about going back to an office setting, with most indicating that they've been more productive at home. In the groups we discussed the biggest changes we've experienced in the last year and the adjustments that might need to be made as we return (e.g. personal and professional boundaries, workday flexibility and pace, commuting, office politics, and in-person interaction). We also exchanged advice for navigating such change (e.g. focusing on things within our control, keeping an open mind, and being patient with ourselves and others). Members agreed that we should be intentional about trying to hold onto things that have been positives this year, including a focus on mindfulness and wellness, integration of work and life, and engaging with coworkers on a social basis.

- **Member Relations Work Group.** *Robin Thorner (St. Mary's University School of Law) and Sheryl Roberts (Smith, Anderson)* have been leading this group. On February 18th we held our second brainstorming and networking session with close to 30 attendees. The small-group discussions consisted of a mix of school attendees and firm/employer representatives. The main topic was this past OCI recruiting season and its shift in timing for most members due to the pandemic. First in breakout rooms and later as one large group, participating EP member shared experiences about what went right as well as difficulties they encountered. Some members' feedback was largely positive, focusing on the high application and fast acceptance rates. Some, especially those with smaller programs, mentioned they liked the common 14 day turnaround as opposed to 28 days.

That said, many members voiced concerns about the challenges they had faced, particularly those employers with larger summer programs. Both employer and school representatives often cited greatly increased staff and student stress this year. Some EPs voiced concerns that those newer to our profession might be dissuaded from staying due to the added workload. A lot of employer members mentioned that they preferred fall recruiting, and many school members were deciding whether to move their OCI back to the previous timing in summer.

While many EPs stated that the timing of this past OCI season was problematic, most agreed that the virtual OCI and technology ended up working quite well. Employers pointed to a lot of challenges and late nights due to this year's technology, including delayed access to transcripts. That said, overall most found this year's OCI programs to be a success and would like to see at least some of OCI stay virtual.

The topic of virtual callbacks was also raised; a couple of employers brought up the value of the in-person callback and asked about the students' perspectives. There was some discussion about whether students would be comfortable with in-person callbacks, if offered. Several schools voiced concerns on behalf of students, pointing out that while students might prefer learning on campus given schools' rigorous procedures, they might not be comfortable with traveling and visiting a firm office. Some firms mentioned wanting to have the same system for their different offices but also noted challenges since the pandemic's impact could still widely vary by location. Given the current uncertainties of the pandemic, firms generally hadn't made decisions about the format of callback interviews for this upcoming OCI season.