

MEMORANDUM

TO: NALP Executive Board

FROM: Frantz Price, Jr. and Sunita Iyer, NALP International & Advanced Degree Section Chairs

DATE: March 26, 2026

RE: NALP International & Advanced Degree Advising and Recruiting Section Board Report

Please find below a report of the International & Advanced Degree Advising and Recruiting Section's activities since the last Board Report in January 2026.

Section Call

The International & Advanced Degree Section held its quarterly meeting on Tuesday, March 17 at 1:00 p.m. ET. During the call:

Jessie Spressart, Founder and Lead Coach of Optia Consulting, was the guest speaker. Jessie provided our section with guidance on how law schools and law firms can help manage the stress and anxiety that our students are feeling as they deal with law school, the earlier recruiting timelines, and the uncertainty of navigating the job market as an international student.

She began by inviting our members to register for the NALP Mental Health First Aid Virtual Workshop on May 11 and 12, 2026. The workshop provides participants with the skills needed to connect with and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and direct them to the appropriate care. Upon completion of the program, participants will become certified in Mental Health First Aid.

Jessie then touched on earlier 1L hiring timelines, changing immigration policies, and difficult job markets all leading to instability, fear, and grief among our students, and emphasized how important it was for us to recognize and be honest about what they are going through. She then discussed the following topics:

- **Advising Fatigue & Secondary Trauma**
 - International students are carrying heavy burdens. Often, when trying to support them, we can feel helpless at our lack of control over the issues hurting them and our inability to make things tangibly better.
 - Most career advisors do not have formal mental health training, yet we tend to be the first and most utilized point of contact for many of our students.
 - Without a release valve, the pressure we take on may become too much.
 - It is important to connect with our students without being "overconnected".

- **Empathy v. Compassion**
 - Jessie referred to a spectrum of emotion in our engagement with students that ranges from Pity → Sympathy → Empathy → Compassion
 - While being empathetic can cause you to absorb your advisee's emotions as your own, showing compassion instead lets you recognize what the student is experiencing while still maintaining the necessary distance to allow for better support.
 - Compassion allows for the intention to help rather than just conveying emotion.

- **Knowing Your Role**
 - It is not our role to provide mental health support.
 - We should not make promises about outcomes that we cannot control.
 - Instead, we should listen without judgment, advocate for our students, help them articulate their concerns and goals, and maintain consistency in our engagement.

- **What to Say When You Can't Fix It**
 - First, acknowledge the student's concerns.
 - Answer with honesty and be present.
 - Do not feel as though you have to fill the silence.
 - Provide the student with referrals to other colleagues and mental health resources.

- **Taking Care of Yourself**
 - Without taking care of ourselves and our own mental health, we cannot provide effective support for our students.
 - Jessie provided helpful phrases to use in our counseling when we are unable to provide a student with a tangible solution to problems that are outside of our control.

Work Group Update

The Section did not suggest any new work groups. All Vice Chair positions have been filled, as listed below:

Amanda Thyden	Vice Chair - Well-being Champion
Amy Kimmel	Vice Chair - Bar Exam Issues
Caroline Springer	Vice Chair -- Member Relations
Clara Solomon	Vice Chair - Legislative Monitoring
Sarah Gruzaz	Vice Chair - Knowledge Management
Clara Solomon	Vice Chair - Annual Education Conference / Bulletin+ Article and Webinar Planning

Going forward, we are advised to provide recommendations of section members who might serve in leadership roles that become available in the coming year.

2026 NALP Annual Education Conference

The section was reminded that two of our proposals were selected for the 2026 NALP Annual Education Conference:

- Legal Limbo: International Students in a Shifting America
 - Thursday, April 16th, 10:00 – 11:00am
 - Sunita Iyer, Yazmyne Vasquez Eterovic, Ryan Coleman, Martin Rosenow
 - International students hoping to study in the U.S. face more challenges now due to changing immigration policies and widespread misinformation. Student visa processing was halted creating backlogs impacting international student enrollment at U.S.

universities. SEVIS terminations, social media screening, and extensive background checks have created additional roadblocks for global talent. Uncertainty looms over the future of OPT and H-1B programs so alternatives should also be explored. Join us to learn how law schools and employers are addressing today's immigration challenges. The panel will consist of law school career advisors, a law school visa services officer and an immigration attorney.

- Supporting International Students in Uncertain Times
 - Friday, April 17th, 10:30 -11:45am
 - Clara Solomon, Caroline Springer, Frantz Price, Jr., Elizabeth Gradinger
 - International lawyers — JD and LL.M. — manage not only academic and professional pressures, but also stressors tied to events in their home regions, and geopolitical situations affecting their immigration status and studies in the U.S. The emotional and psychological impacts of domestic political rhetoric, international natural disasters, war, civil instability, or humanitarian crises (among others) are felt intensely. These situations can affect a student's ability to focus, engage, and plan for their careers — particularly when their immigration status or employment prospects are also in flux. This session will explore how legal career professionals can support international students during times of uncertainty.

Board Updates

Cassandra Stump shared the following Board updates:

- The Board stated that NALP remains in strong financial shape and expressed continued appreciation for the high level of member engagement.
- NALP is seeking an Assistant Manager of Member Services to support member engagement and development efforts while also providing outstanding customer service, accurate data management, timely order fulfillment, and broad administrative support.
- Members were reminded to register for upcoming events, including the AEC in April and the 2026 Professional Development Institute to be held December 3-4 in Washington, DC., and were told about the recently held Legal Recruiting Summit and Lateral Recruiting Summit at Fordham Law, and the Newer Professionals' Forum that was held in Philadelphia in February. RFPs for the PDI and the 2027 AEC are open.
- Members were encouraged to contact President-Elect Mike Ende if they were interested in serving in various NALP volunteer positions.
- NALP elections were held from March 4 – 18.
- Members should complete NALP Directory of Legal Employers forms as applicable.

Member Relations Update

Caroline Springer provided the Member Relations update. Since our last Section Meeting in January, the following new members have joined the Section:

- Morgan Moore - University of Tulsa College of Law
- Katherine Butler - University of Massachusetts
- Joy Wang - University of Minnesota
- Nikia Gray – NALP
- Erica Lee - UCLA School of Law

Welcome emails were sent to our new members. We have 167 current members in our section (past community membership was 197).

Environmental Scanning

This section invites guest speakers to inform the section about market updates, recruiting trends, career resources, etc. The speaker for this meeting discussed how members can help manage the stress and anxiety that our students are feeling as they deal with law school, new recruiting timelines, and the uncertainty of navigating the job market as an international student.

Open Discussion

The members did not have any further questions or discussion points.

Next Steps

The next meeting of our section will be held at the AEC on Thursday, April 16, from 12:30 – 2:15pm in Room 201 of the conference hall.