

NALP JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP SECTION

Quarterly Report to the Board of Directors

February 2009

Submitted by: Kirsten Solberg, Chair

Overview

Our section held a meeting by conference call on January 21. Approximately 40 people participated. We had reminders about the NALP Bulletin articles, conference programs, and listserv being great clerkship resources for all members. We also had reports from the work groups, as summarized below.

A period of open discussion focused on conferences. A newcomer to clerkships asked whether she should attend the Newer Professionals Conference or the Annual Education Conference. Various people chimed in about the advantages and disadvantages of each, including more intimate versus more expansive networking opportunities. Substantively, the Newer Professionals Conference has a clerkship program that focuses more on the nuts and bolts of clerkship advising (and this year should be strong with presenter Terry Galligan, a veteran of our section), whereas the Annual Education Conference has clerkship programs covering more nuances for a broader audience. Finally, there was some discussion about whether the current economic conditions will curb attendance at the Annual Education Conference. Most people needed to justify their attendance more formally this year but were still planning to attend. The pointers in the January 8 NALP Now email about advocating for conference attendance were much appreciated.

Articles and Programs

Articles and programs are proceeding as planned. Two of our three Bulletin articles have been published, and our third was just submitted for publication. Our program speakers for the Annual Education Conference are preparing their presentations.

Articles

- Alternative Judicial Clerkships: Staff Attorneys (December)
- The Value of Judicial Clerkships for Transactional Careers (January)
- Tips for Writing Good Clerkship Recommendations (March)

Programs

- Beyond Article III – Clerkships with Administrative Law Judges
- Maximizing Faculty and Alumni Involvement in Your Judicial Clerkship Program
- OSCAR: Season Review and First Look at Version 5.0

OSCAR Work Group

The Work Group membership for OSCAR 5.0 was finalized in November. Returning members Rhonda Beassie (Houston); Marilyn Drees (Yale), chair; Terry Galligan (Berkeley); Allison Heverin (Northwestern); and Katie Wilkinson (Tulane) were joined by Sonja Hayes (Stetson) and Susan Staab (Chicago). The group had a conference call in early December to review outstanding

issues and preview the likely schedule for spring. A subcommittee met with the OSCAR staff in Philadelphia on December 18 to try to work through one of the major issues: the inconsistent ways in which OSCAR labels and categorizes judges' hiring status. The meeting resulted in agreement on a streamlined listing of clerkship vacancies and clarification of the information presented about judges; however, discussions will continue on some issues.

The OSCAR staff has been preoccupied throughout January with the administrative and physical transfer of OSCAR from the D.C. District Court to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, which was completed February 2. The Work Group resumed its regular conference calls with the OSCAR staff on February 4. The discussion made clear that most of the changes forwarded through the Work Group were incorporated into the official specifications prepared by the OSCAR staff for the OSCAR developer. Additional topics of discussion included the schedule for cleaning up old applications and accounts, the approach for revising the directory of recommenders, and the tentative beta-test schedule for Version 5.0 in April 2009. The group will continue with weekly conference calls through the spring—a law school work group call alternating with an OSCAR staff call—to discuss ongoing issues and review the results of testing for Version 5.0.

State Court Work Group

The State Court Work Group is proceeding with the project of compiling information about state court clerkships in certain jurisdictions, to supplement the Vermont Law School Guide. The jurisdictions initially targeted are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Washington D.C., based on membership and interest among the Work Group. In conducting its informal outreach, the group will focus on questions such as:

1. What is the timing of applications to each court (appellate and trial) if any further supplement to the information already provided in the Vermont Guide would be helpful?
2. When is it likely an applicant will hear if he or she has received an interview?
3. What information can be learned about the interview itself? Are there certain questions or types of questions that are typically asked? Will the interview be with a panel of judges, just one judge, judge and clerks, or another combination? Will there be a substantive skills test or hypothetical question?
4. If an offer is given, do judges allow a reasonable time to reply? Do judges on the same court collaborate so as not to give multiple offers to the same person?
5. Will successful applicants be required or expected to take that state's bar exam?

The group is preparing now a sample of one or two jurisdictions for agreement about the approach in which the information is gathered and presented. Then the outreach will proceed in earnest so that results can be shared in the next quarter.

Alumni/Lateral Work Group

The Alumni/Lateral Work Group has struggled to organize a big topic, but will hold a regrouping meeting on February 10.