

MEMO

TO: Dana Morris, Board Liaison

FROM: Josie Mitchell, NALP Law Student Professional Development Section Chair

CC: Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director

RE: Student Professional Development Section Second Quarter Report

DATE: October 15, 2009

I. Committee Summary

During summer months it was challenging to schedule conference calls as key members of each work group were on different schedules. As a result I have communicated regularly using e-mail to receive updates about bulletin articles or program development for the Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

II. Work Group Reports

A. Professionalism Standards & Curricula:

RFP Declined: Partners in Passing on Professionalism

We were disappointed that the RFP submitted by this work group for the 2010 Conference in San Juan was not accepted. However, there remains significant interest in the topic. We were pleased that Claudia Rizzo invited Nancy Lochner, Co-Vice Chair of this work group, to moderate a program that was accepted. We hope this will help the work group gain visibility with the NALP membership.

Bulletin Article Published, August 2009: "Best Practices in Law Student Professional Development and Professionalism: Lessons From Your Colleagues". Submitted by Nancy Lochner & Heather Karns.

Updates from members of this work group:

Nancy Lochner, Hamline University (Co-Vice Chair)

I was asked by Claudia Rizzo at NALP, on behalf of the conference planning team, to moderate a session they came up with on professionalism. They want to hear do's and don'ts on the topic from employers, and they want some sort of written list, so schools can take that back and advocate for assistance in meeting the issues. I'm in the process of trying to get the panelists they suggested to me nailed down.

As for OCI, we've been done for several weeks now. Unfortunately, I haven't heard of many offers. Our OCI is very regional, and there is very little hiring going on (small classes). We had all but 2 of the usual employers on campus, but they're just moving very slowly and hiring very modestly. There has been a lot of talk about change, but I don't have any sense of whether it will actually occur in our market. At this point it's all talk.

Heather Karns, University of Toledo (Co-Vice Chair)

As a result of conversations that Nancy, August and I had, I have been working more with our Legal Research and Writing instructors to address issues of professionalism on a broader scale- to include in their courses more focus on professionalism as it relates to writing, time keeping, presentation, final work product, expectations of employers. We also just held a tailor-made advanced training for students who want to do project work. It focused on professionalism and how to deliver the kind of work product an attorney needs without having the benefit of learning the person's style and getting to know him/her first. I think more students will need to jump in for short-term projects instead of hold out for law clerk positions or summer positions.

OCI has been ok for us this year. We were down a bit with employers and a number of our employers chose to come later into the semester than early interview weeks. (I think spring OCI is on the way, too!). I have heard of a few students having multiple offers but much slower than usual.

B. E-Professionalism and Social Networking Work Group

RFP's accepted: E-Networking Part I --To Tweet or Not to Tweet; E-Networking Part 2 --Putting Your Best E-Footprint Forward.

Bulletin Articles: Slated for February 2010 and July 2010

Updates from members of this work group:

Marina Feehan, University of San Francisco (Co-Vice Chair)

Connected with Dana Morris to discuss the possibility of a NALP / CALI collaboration, which Dana will present to the NALP board. Kristen Hulse of Georgetown attended the CALI conference this past June on behalf of our E-Professionalism group, where they discussed Social Media Best Practices.

Both RFP's for NALP 2010 Conference on E-Networking were accepted.

Part 1: E-Networking – To Tweet or Not To Tweet: Have been working with co-presenter, Chandra Clouden of the NALP Recruiting Section on structuring our part of the presentation; developing survey questions to ask either NALP membership or local city group memberships such as BALRA / LALRA, etc about use of Social Media tools. Chandra and I are also gathering materials to be handed out at the session, such as sample social media policies.

Part 2: E-Networking – Putting Your Best E-Footprint Forward.

Our law firm speaker will not be able to attend so we are currently searching for a replacement. We need a speaker to talk about E-diligence from the employer's perspective – what type of web-based background check will an employer do on a potential employee, best practices, issues that may arise from conducting on-line checks. Have been gathering examples of "good, bad & ugly" on-line behavior to use as examples during the session. For the NALP sessions, I am currently finalizing the marketing blurb to be included in the Conference brochure.

As for the E-Professionalism group, we need to have a meeting to follow-up on this summer's progress with the E-Guide. An outline was created for the guide and needs to be reviewed by Josie & Dana. We had scheduled a call on this but I had to leave country unexpectedly during the summer.

Amy Perez, Nova Southeastern

I've been engaged in the topic, and have participated in LinkedIn and Twitter webinars geared specifically for career development professionals.

As for possible upcoming changes to the recruiting timeline, I think that it'll be interesting to see how everything unfolds. Ultimately, if employers simply cannot predict in August what their needs will be for the following summer, I think we'll see a shift. This makes perfect sense to me, but it will definitely present its own set of challenges on the law school side.

C. Lawyer/Law Student Professional Development Collaboration:

RFP Accepted: Ménage a Trois (It's Not What You're Thinking!) Partnering Together to Make a Successful Lawyer

Bulletin Articles: "The Continuing Employer/Law School Professional Development Dialogue" was submitted by David Diamond. (Published September 2009); Second article slated for January 2010.

Updates from members of this work group:

David Diamond, Northwestern (Co-Vice Chair)

There really has not been much activity in the work group, largely due to the fact that we have no firm-side counterparts with whom to collaborate. I never heard back from any firm-side individuals about being part of the work group, so there have been no efforts towards getting a conference call together or other collaboration. I do have several school-side individuals interested in working on projects, so if we can recruit more firm side volunteers we can start working together on additional projects.

In September, the NALP Bulletin ran my article summarizing the finding from the research Kay Nash and I did on law firm/law school collaboration and I otherwise have no projects planned. I plan to talk with Sandee soon to get an update on her progress on the various projects and articles she is working on.

III. Long Range Strategic Planning Committee Issues and Challenges

Nancy Lochner, Hamline University (Co-Vice Chair)

As for long-range planning...hmmm.....I think the biggest issue will be meeting the shifting needs of the legal marketplace. Along with what was already underway in terms of Best Practices, Carnegie, etc., now we have the economy and the potential sea changes in hiring practices and training...that is somehow going to affect us. I suppose it will have the expected heightened focus on professional development. I would think we'll also need to continue to focus more and more on alternatives to practicing careers. It will be interesting to see what the economy, generally, brings in terms of the "next generation" of students (in the next 5-10 years) and how they're different because of it.

Josie Mitchell, University of Washington

Discussed current hiring trends with several interviewers during OCI, including the possibility of a later (spring?) recruiting/OCI program. Some interviewers felt strongly that we should move that direction, while others expressed concern about the most competitive students being hired by other employers earlier in the year. Some small firms were completely unaware that this issue was being discussed. Overall the discussion favored a shift away from the current model of mid-summer hiring if NALP can get most employers who currently participate in OCI to agree to the new timelines.

As this change would require students to submit applications and participate in interviews during the school year, we speculated about the logistics. The UW is one of a handful of schools on the quarter system, so we are understandably concerned about potential changes to recruiting timelines that might work well for semester schools but not for quarter schools. If OCI is held during the school year, we would likely need to shift to a weekend format in order to minimize the impact on classes, and to be able to maintain our current fall recruiting model.

Additionally, schools and employers are looking more closely at the issues surrounding professional behavior and professional development. While Co-Chairing the Law Student PD Work Group last year, our outreach to members made it clear that while everyone agrees it is a growing issue, not everyone is in agreement about the changes needed, or who should be responsible. Our work group felt it was best to start by defining and separating “professionalism” and “professional development”, making it easier to address the issues and identify solutions. Many members described various arrangements with local Bar Associations to deliver programming throughout the year. Currently, the Washington State Bar Association is working on a professionalism initiative in collaboration with faculty at the various Washington law schools. I spoke with the Executive Director of the WSBA about this project last week, and we are discussing ways our office might participate in this project.

IV. Environmental Scan:

The economy is still a concern, though many employers who participated in On-Campus Interviews at the University of Washington mentioned their workload was increasing. They believe the downward spiral in hiring is beginning to level out, though most employers are still being extremely conservative. Several large employers cancelled interviews, but at least half of them indicated plans to solicit direct applications from students at a later time, with the hope that the economy will begin picking up after the first of the year. Students who have received offers are accepting more quickly than in the past—they are happy to have a job and are less likely to wait for what they perceive to be a better offer.

After OCI at the University of Washington this year, I surveyed employers and students to solicit feedback about the interview process to assist with planning for next year. The comments received were very helpful, addressing many issues such as professionalism, diversity, interviewing skills, etc. Some interviewers were not able to articulate their summer 2010 hiring plans, including the number of summer associate positions they were recruiting for, which has increased anxiety among students.

Overall, everyone seems to believe that the worst is over but they are definitely waiting to make any big decisions and/or changes until after the first of the year.