

# MEMORANDUM

**To:** Neil Dennis, Board Liaison

**Cc:** Fred Thrasher, Acting Executive Director  
Meaghan Hagner, Member Services Coordinator

**From:** Eric Bono, Chair and Law Student Professional Development Leadership Team

**Date:** October 18, 2018

**Re:** Second Quarter Report, NALP Law Student Professional Development Section

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The NALP Law Student Professional Development Section (“LSPD”) has settled in nicely to the 2018-19 NALP year. This report identifies our leadership team, summarizes the environmental scanning we conducted in our second quarterly section call and describes the status of our projects.

## I. Leadership Team

Chair – Eric Bono, University of Denver Sturm College of Law, [ebono@law.du.edu](mailto:ebono@law.du.edu)

Annual Education Conference/*Bulletin* Article Planning Vice Chairs, Erin Pedrami, LSU, [epedrami@lsu.edu](mailto:epedrami@lsu.edu); Alex Piller, Illinois, [apiller2@illinois.edu](mailto:apiller2@illinois.edu)

Law Student and Lawyer Professional Development Sections Collaboration Vice Chairs, Elisabeth Beal, William & Mary, [eabeal@wm.edu](mailto:eabeal@wm.edu); Shannon Schaab, DePaul, [SSCHAAB@depaul.edu](mailto:SSCHAAB@depaul.edu)

Best Practices Guide Vice Chairs, Francie Scott, Wake Forest, [scottfs@wfu.edu](mailto:scottfs@wfu.edu); Kate Christoff, Cincinnati, [christkb@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:christkb@ucmail.uc.edu)

Membership Development Vice Chairs, Patty Lopez, Case Western [pmr43@case.edu](mailto:pmr43@case.edu) and Elizabeth Carr, Mercer, [carr\\_e@law.mercer.edu](mailto:carr_e@law.mercer.edu)

Professional Identity Formation Vice Chairs, Susan Fine, George Washington, [sfine@law.gwu.edu](mailto:sfine@law.gwu.edu); Melissa Berry, Washington, [mmberry@uw.edu](mailto:mmberry@uw.edu), Angela Cruseturner, Baylor, [Angela\\_Cruseturner@baylor.edu](mailto:Angela_Cruseturner@baylor.edu)

## II. Section Call & Environmental Scanning

On October 4, 2018, the LSPD section held its second quarterly call. Thirty-four members participated in the call and the discussion was lively. We began the call with a board report from Neil Dennis, our NALP board liaison. We also gave an overview of two of our major projects for this year—a booklet summarizing law firm professional development programs and a LSPD best practices guide—and we recruited volunteers to assist with these tasks. We devoted the remainder of the meeting to environmental scanning, as our members seem to enjoy these discussions. Specifically, we discussed three issues our members frequently encounter on the student professional development front. Those discussions are summarized below.

### A. **How do CSOs balance the desire to serve our students and keep them coming back with the concern that too much "handholding" may not adequately prepare them for the ownership mentality that will be required in their careers? – Facilitated by Elisabeth Beal (William & Mary)**

Law school career advisers share a common experience with some students who tend to present the same questions/issues multiple times. Such questions often relate to networking and interview preparation tips and/or they may seek multiple reviews of the same application materials. Call participants agreed that this might arise from students' desire to do well combined with a lack of experience, which may lead them to lack confidence in their own judgment.

While it can be tempting to provide excellent "customer service," by simply answering repeat questions, callers agreed that this approach may not help students develop the confidence and judgment that they will need in the legal profession. Therefore, several participants offered tips based on how they address these situations. Many of the suggestions focused on instilling confidence in the student by validating the student's ability to make their own judgment. For example:

- Asking the student, "What does your gut tell you?" and then guiding them from there.
- Posing a question such as, "How do you think the employer would react to that?"
- Assuring the student, "I really trust your judgement" or, "I've observed you making great decisions" in an effort to instill confidence.
- Some participants emphasized the value of making it clear that there is not always one right answer, and that sometimes professional/career development circumstances can be ambiguous, which is ok.
- Pro Tip: Student not taking notes or appearing to glaze over in your meeting? Give them an "assignment" to follow up with a short email summarizing your discussion and next steps instead of sending a follow-up to the student. Or, work with the student to complete a "to do" list.

**B. How do CSOs work with faculty to overcome scheduling conflicts between mandatory academic activities and planned student professional development programs? – Facilitated by Eric Bono (Denver)**

Virtually all experienced law school career services professionals have faced a situation where an important, carefully planned, well-publicized professional development program is pre-empted by a last minute makeup class or mandatory study session hastily scheduled by a faculty member. We discussed several ways CSOs can seek to work with faculty to minimize these types of conflicts:

- Asking faculty to track canceled and make-up classes. Ask to use those canceled class times or at least to be notified of makeup sessions.
- For schools that have a free hour at lunch, assign that hour each day to different areas of the law school—e.g. two days for student orgs, a day for the CSO, etc. and encourage faculty to check this schedule before arranging makeups.
- Work with faculty assistants by providing them with event lists and inviting them to programs. The faculty assistants may then encourage faculty to avoid scheduling over top of your events if they know about them.
- Push key programs out to faculty listservs.
- Work with legal writing faculty to try to avoid scheduling programs during 1L writing assignment times.
- Have a specified person in the law school coordinate all event scheduling to minimize conflicts.
- Seek direct collaboration with faculty on professional development in order to help them to recognize how important CSO programs are along the way.

**C. Handling student resistance/lack of participation in professional development initiatives – Facilitated by Eric Bono (Denver)**

Most CSOs struggle with how best to approach student resistance (or at least lack of participation) in PD programming. Some schools have used incentives to encourage participation while other schools have succeeded in making some PD programming mandatory, either by building it into a required course or establishing a co-curricular requirement. One participant, whose school has a mandatory co-curricular PD program, emphasized that it seems to work best to keep communications as positive as possible, even when notifying a student that they are behind on their requirements. Leading off with a helping hand rather than a reprimand can build rapport and generate buy-in.

### **III. Work Group Reports**

#### **A. Annual Education Conference/*Bulletin* Article Planning (by Erin Pedrami and Alex Piller)**

The Annual Education Conference/*Bulletin* Article Planning Work Group does not have an update for this quarter since we have already submitted Conference RFPs and proposed *Bulletin* articles for this year. Beginning in early 2019, however, this work group will promote the RFP and article submission processes regularly through posts on NALP Connect and on quarterly LSPD section calls.

#### **B. Law Student and Lawyer Professional Development Sections Collaboration (by Elisabeth Beal and Shannon Schaab)**

Our initiative to interview and draft write-ups about law firm PD programs is now well underway. Approximately 17 firms have agreed to participate, and 7 write-ups are complete. We set a goal of December 15th to complete this initial round of write-ups, and we are hoping to reach 20 firms by that point. We discussed the initiative and again sought volunteers on both the LSPD and LPD quarterly calls.

#### **C. Best Practices Guide (by Francie Scott and Kate Christoff)**

We would like this guide to be a go-to resource for law school professionals implementing professional development programs (whether mandatory or voluntary). After considering what we believe to be key topics for PD programs, we are now turning to the full LSPD section to help us compile teaching tools.

For the following topics, we have asked LSPD members to share exercises, programming, and/or teaching tools.

- Self-Assessment
- Legal career exploration - understanding different legal practice areas
- Critical skills for professional success (Foundations for Practice)
- Resume development
- Cover letter development
- Personal branding/responsible use of social media/professional online presence
- Networking
- Interviewing skills
- Mindset/Resilience/Wellbeing
- Diversity and inclusion
- Negotiating job offers
- Professional communication
- Success in summer jobs
- Professional etiquette
- Business of law firms/financial management/law firm economics
- Leadership skills

- Project management
- Professional ethics (introductory)

#### **D. Membership Development (by Patty Lopez and Elizabeth Carr)**

We will implement a new strategy of posting professional development topics to NALP Connect and asking for commentary on what questions and issues in the PD realm are important to other NALP members. Then we will reach out to those who comment and ask them to participate in our calls and sections. We will also continue to grow our list of previously active and newly interested members of the group by actively reaching out to potential new members as well as existing members to assess what they'd like to see from the group, what topics they'd like cover, and what they hope to gain from their membership.

We will continue to join other section calls periodically to garner interest in the group. We will also continue to send the group of newer members the agenda before each section call to get their thoughts and encourage engagement. We will encourage them to invite 1-2 colleagues or send the agenda on seeking additional thoughts. During conversations with interested new members, we will suggest helpful resources developed by the group such as the PD Booklet. We will continue to make outreach efforts to these new/potentially interested members and welcome any volunteers who may be interested in conducting some of this outreach as well.

#### **E. Professional Identity Formation (by Susan Fine, Melissa Berry and Angela Cruseturner)**

The Professional Identity Formation Working Group is still thinking about ways to educate the NALP membership about this topic, pending the development of resources by the Holloran Center at the University of St. Thomas Law School. While we are on hold, we are considering a discussion forum based on Neil Hamilton and Jerry Organ's recent article in PD Quarterly, "Each Law Student Must Take Increasing Ownership Over Professional Development During Law School." In addition, we hope to propose an initiative in collaboration with our counterparts in the LPD Section in the near future, perhaps following the Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers conference in Denver at the beginning of November.

#### **F. Professionalism Videos (Collaboration with JD Career Advisers and Recruiting Sections – Eric Bono (Denver))**

We have decided to focus our efforts on seeking to increase the viewership of the professionalism videos produced last year by this cross-sectional collaboration, which focused on various aspects of student professionalism in the context of on-campus recruiting ("OCI"). In that regard, we will work with NALP to send out additional appropriately timed reminders through channels such as NALP Connect, NALP Now and perhaps even the Weekly Industry News Digest. In addition, we will review the current videos to determine whether we might add any more content in the context of fall recruiting (e.g. we would like to determine if there is a need for a video on how students should seek additional information from employers while considering one or more offers).

Because many law students are interested in employers outside of the OCI process, we are considering adding new professionalism videos tailored toward those types of employers. For example, we plan to gather feedback from Government & Public Interest employers (perhaps through NALP Connect or by other means) to determine if there are professionalism issues they would like us to address. If so, we will seek to create videos more tailored to those paths.