

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mike Ende, NALP Board Liaison, Public Service Section  
**Cc:** Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director; Samuel Halpert, NALP Director of Public Service Initiatives  
**From:** Sharon Buckingham (Villanova), Chair, Public Service Section (2021-2022)  
**Date:** March 16, 2022  
**Re:** Public Service Section – Fourth Quarterly Report

This report contains updates on the activities of the 2021-2022 NALP Public Service Section and its Work Groups for the fourth quarter. The Work Groups and Vice-Chairs are:

LRAP/CCRAA Work Group:

- Jennifer Geller, University of Oregon School of Law
- Aoife Delargy Lowe, Equal Justice Works

Member Relations Work Group:

- Diane Fears, Wayne State Law School
- Susan Curry, University of Chicago Law School

Mini-Conference Planning Work Group:

- Glory McLaughlin, University of Alabama School of Law
- Melanie Rowen, Berkeley Law

NALP Annual Education Conference and Webinar Planning Work Group:

- Katie Behan\*, University of Windsor Faculty of Law
  - Jana Matthews, Seattle University School of Law
- \*Katie is on disability leave for the remainder of the term.

Pro Bono Work Group:

- Laura Burstein\*, SMU Dedman School of Law
- \*Laura's co-vice chair, Lauren Worsek, left her law school position and is now with Lawyers for Good Government.

PSJD Resources Development Work Group:

- Brent Page, Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI)
- Jocelyn Witzel, Saint Louis University School of Law

Publications Work Group:

- Brooke Meckler, Equal Justice Works
- Michelle Takagishi-Almeida, Southwestern Law School

RECOMMENDATIONS: We do not recommend any new Work Groups for 2022-2023.

QUARTERLY CALL:

On March 9, the Section held its fourth quarterly call. The focus of our meeting was on starting to exchange ideas for RFPs for the 2023 AEC in Vancouver, since the RFP deadline is quite early this year. In conjunction with that conversation, we discussed what might make us feel renewed and engaged, and how we might consider programming through that lens. As enthusiasm for volunteering has waned a bit as a result of the pandemic, and as many seem to be evaluating the value of volunteering (what's in it for them), we discussed how we can work to create programs that will enhance our own professional skills and needs.

We began with several current Section members discussing how their involvement in programming and publications has enhanced their professional development. (Special thanks to Freda Coleman-Jackson, Sara Malan and Swati Parikh.) As we turned to the discussion of potential RFPs, Swati Parikh and Cybele Smith advised that RFPs are likely to be more successful when accompanied by detailed explanations, handouts, speakers, and when collaborating with another NALP Section.

Following the meeting, Jana Matthews provided a summary of proposal ideas:

- Program presenting unique things that your school is doing or ways you are collaborating that others could benefit from hearing about
- The great resignation/great upgrade, and related navigation of work environments across generational expectations
- From Languishing to Thriving: How to Get Out of Your Post Pandemic Funk
- Financial Management/Debt Management: Who are the Players?
- Setting Yourself Up to Make Public Service a Lifelong Career
- DEI Implications of Unpaid Internships/Moving the Needle Towards Paid Public Interest Internships
- Social Justice – What is it Really? How Can Everyone Play a Part?
- Does being passionate about your work inherently lead to burnout? (Perhaps book discussion about Sarah Jaffe's "Work Won't Love You Back")
- YOLO/Life is Tenuous: How to manage graduates' post-pandemic disinclination to move geographically for new opportunities?

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING:

Most work groups had no additional activity of note since our February Quarterly Report, but the Environmental Scanning work group provided this update:

Since the last quarterly report, we have held our final regional environmental scanning networking call, with the West/Rocky Mountain region of NALP, on March 8, 2022. (We plan to do individualized outreach to the few Public Service Section members in Canada.) Four of our NALP colleagues joined us, from law schools in Northern California, Southern California, and Washington. Having only recently concluded annual consortium-based public interest/public service job fairs, we began with a discussion of law school professionals' experiences and observations during those programs, both this academic year (2021-22) and last (2020-21). During that discussion, we touched upon many of the Work Group's themes for this year – virtual versus in-person programming, student engagement and outcomes, public interest/public service employer participation levels. Discussion then turned to outcomes for the class of 2021. Below are highlights.

#### A. Public Service Job Fairs

All schools represented by our law school colleagues on the call were members of a geography-based consortium that organizes and hosts an annual public service job fair, in February each year.

- All reported running a virtual job fair in 2022 and in 2021. Some public service employers this year expressed interest in returning to an in-person format, but the consensus among law schools is that a virtual program comes with many benefits (increased employer participation, from a larger geographic area; easier for students to participate; fewer logistics, like parking and food; costing less money compared to an in-person event), and will be the way of the future.
- All reported seeing an increase in employer participation. Numbers increased slightly in 2021, and still more in 2022. All reported being able to attract employers that would not have been able to register for the job fair had it been in person. In fact, one participant reported that, the job fair grew so significantly this year, they expanded from one day to two days, for the first time.
- Two of the consortia organize public service job fairs that include both interview opportunities and networking opportunities. One law school colleague reported that their consortium included networking in the past, when the program was in person, but that that component was eliminated from the virtual program.
  - The virtual networking is in the form of table talk, where students can pop in and out of virtual employer rooms. One school had employers provide their own Zoom links for this purpose; another used Flo Recruit.
  - Specific times were designated for table talk. In one program, table talk opportunities ran concurrently with pre-scheduled interviews for part of a day.
  - Students did report receiving offers from employers with whom they had engaged via table talk.
  - Our colleague from the consortium that decided to forego networking opportunities in a virtual setting reported that they came up with a creative work-around. A few weeks beyond the end of the interview program, law school professionals contacted employers that had participated in the program, and

asked whether they had summer positions that remained unfilled. They also reached out to students who had not yet reported accepting an offer, and provided them with an opportunity to submit their resume for inclusion in a resume book. The resume book was then distributed to employers still seeking to fill positions, thereby allowing students who might have engaged with these employers via table talk to still get their resumes in the employers' hands.

- One colleague reported seeing less student engagement in this year's public service job fair – student participation numbers were down about 20%. The same was true for student participation in on-campus interviews focused on the private sector.
  - Another colleague acknowledged that they had many students sign up for their career fair, who then did not continue with the process and apply for available positions, or waited until the last minute to apply. As of the time of the call, the organizers were gathering data to see what might have led to the discrepancy in participation among students.
- A trend we have started noticing, especially this year, is exploding offers from public service employers following these job fairs. Students have been given less than 24 hours in some cases, and in others have been asked to respond on a weekend.
  - We discussed how such a short turn-around may be a way for public service employers to gauge who is truly committed to their mission.
  - We also discussed how such a short turn-around is really unfair to students. It gives them no chance to continue to explore other opportunities where they have an application pending, and requires them to make an uninformed decision.
  - One colleague reported that their consortium requires employers to agree, when registering for the job fair, to provide students at least a week to consider an offer. But, this colleague also acknowledged that they operate on the honor system, and have no way of actually enforcing this provision.

#### B. Class of 2021

Outcomes for the class of 2021 have been good. One colleague reported that their school's employment statistics are the highest they have ever been.

- There are some public service hiring trends that seem to be consistent with what we have heard from colleagues in other NALP regions. Prosecutor's offices, for example, have shown increased willingness to hire graduates before they receive their bar results, and even before graduation. Public defender offices, however, are not trending in this direction in the West/Rocky Mountain region, and continue to wait until a graduate has passed the bar.
- We discussed how many public defense-minded students end up getting jobs in the private sector before the public defender offices start hiring. We also discussed a

theme we have touched upon in other environmental scanning calls – the budding competition for talent between progressive prosecutors’ offices and public defender offices. If prosecutors continue hiring pre-graduation, and those offices are appealing to students also interested in public defense, will public defender offices be prompted to change their hiring timelines?

### C. What We Have Observed Among Students

We also touched upon observations we have made of student attitudes and perceptions.

- There has been a noticeable increase in the number of students talking about the need for a paying summer job to address increased costs of living in the areas where they are. Some positions require students to live in expensive cities, which many students may not be able to afford, and therefore requires them to decide whether the position makes fiscal sense to accept. (This dovetails quite nicely with a comment raised during our March 9 Section Quarterly Call, on shifting the unpaid public service summer paradigm. Perhaps an issue for additional exploration!)
- Students also seem increasingly disillusioned with traditional public interest organizations. To them, these non-profits have been fighting the social justice fight, and failing. They are not interested in joining organizations that, to them, are stuck in their ways. They entered law school with an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to take a more radical approach.

### NEXT MEETING/MOVING FORWARD:

Our Section meeting for the Annual Education Conference is scheduled to take place IN PERSON on Wednesday, April 6 at 7:30am CT. We will regroup after the AEC for another discussion of RFPs and will ask Section members to submit proposals to the AEC/Webinar Planning Work Group on a date TBD (on or before April 25).

### THANK YOU:

I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate the opportunity I have had to work this year with such wonderful colleagues. Thank you, Traci Mundy Jenkins, for reaching out to me. Thank you, Mike Ende, for your guidance and your confidence in me. Thank you, Sam Halpert, for your insights and your unwavering support. Thank you to all of the Work Group Chairs/Vice Chairs for their efforts and their leadership. And thanks to Jen Henfey for encouraging me to take the opportunity. Particularly as we have been working to come out of a pandemic and into a new normal, my involvement with the Public Service Section continues to be a blessing.

Sharon