

**Small & Mid-Sized Law Firm Interest Group**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Report to NALP Board**  
**January 2026**

Jennifer Lucas-Ross and Sheryl Roberts, Co-Chairs

**Updates**

Our Interest Group currently has 95 members, which is an increase of 10 members since our last Board report.

**Quarterly Meeting Dates**

We held the following quarterly meetings since our last report:

December 9, 2025 at 2:00 pm – Concerns remain around student recruiting and all are feeling the pressure in this recruiting season, but of note, the students seem to be handling better than expected and, as always, our professionals are rolling with the changes and making them work for their firms. In addition to NALP business, Ian Nelson of Hotshot Legal spoke to our Group regarding training specific to summer associates, entry-level associates, and laterals and how AI can assist professionals in a small/mid-size firm setting. The presentation was very well received and there was a lot of interest in the topic.

We are currently identifying a date to host our final meeting of the NALP year. The final meeting will involve a review of an informal survey on the structure of recruiting/PD offices among our membership followed by a presentation on how to advocate for additional staffing.

**Interest Group Initiatives (Ongoing):**

Suited: Intelligent Recruiting for Law and Finance Presentation – Mon, Oct. 27, 2025 @ 2:00 p.m. This presentation was well-attended and received, and we subsequently posted an announcement about the potential opportunity here for small and mid-size firms, and how to get involved and in touch with Suited. This was done with the permission of the Board. This effort continues to move forward, but we do believe that end-of-year and beginning-of-year duties and responsibilities, along with the current student recruiting season, are putting any decisions firms may make or consider on hold at that moment. We plan to revisit with Suited and re-post following this recruiting cycle.

Talk to JD Advisors Regarding Potential Webinar – We met with the co-Chairs of the JD Career Advisers Section to discuss the possibility of collaborating on a webinar for law students to introduce them to small and mid-size firms and what it is like to practice at them. The recommendation of the JD Advisers is to first consider a presentation to the JD Advantage and JD Career Advisers members, obtain feedback, and re-assess a plan for the best manner to get the information to students. Our Interest Group has called a small sub-group of volunteers who will clarify our target audience and the “why” of the event along with developing a proposed timeline of events. This sub-group plans to meet in February 2026. This initiative is likely to continue into the next annual NALP cycle.

Small and Mid-Size Law Firm Professional Staffing Survey – Based on the interest of many members of our group, we presented to the NALP Board a request to post a survey to NALP members in connection with how smaller and mid-sized law firms are staffing their professional departments. We are looking to provide our members with some resources around how other firms in our group are staffing departments, and this request is also in line with a presentation that we hope to give in 2026 around how to make the ask to expand your department. That survey request was approved, and we are circling up with Danielle Taylor to obtain assistance in wording the survey in a manner that will offer the best feedback in line with the survey's intentions.

### **Environmental Scanning**

This recruiting season is certainly presenting its challenges and pressure points for not only our Interest Group members, but all involved in student recruiting. While there are some indications that law students, law firms, and law schools seem to be adapting and making adjustments that work for them, there remain ongoing issues in who is best served by these changes. As it relates to small and mid-sized firms, with the increase in direct hiring and fluctuations in law school OCI/outreach program timelines, small to mid-sized firms are left with identifying alternative means to outreach to student candidates that fit within their time and resource constraints. There are certainly benefits to the more tailored direct-to-student approach, but there are also concerns that decoupling from the law school side of recruitment could limit opportunities for connection to some students and/or law schools.

We continue to address and discuss the dissatisfaction of our members that the market does not scale to our size, leaving us with less options. Small to mid-size firms still need to address recruiting, associate development, and integration, and are left to do so with fewer options, less resources, and lack of pedagogical expertise inside our firms.

Interest in how AI can assist small to mid-size firm professionals remains strong with both recruitment and professional development as we look for ways to address some of the challenges noted above.

We have several law school CSO members in our Interest Group. They have mentioned the opportunities they see for advising their students on mid-law opportunities, but the challenges in connecting students to the opportunities with so many firms of varying sizes, different recruiting patterns, and various hiring policies. Perhaps there is an opportunity to collect and report data to assist CSOs in this regard?

### **2025-2026 Leadership Update**

Co-Chairs - Sheryl Roberts and Jennifer Lucas-Ross

- Lawyer Professional Development Working Group Co-Chairs: Rob De Toni and Kate Harrison
- Recruiting Working Group Co-Chair: Katie Greene
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Sherry Lamb
- Well-Being Champion: Sherry Lamb

## **Interest Group Member Articles and Presentations**

- PDI, Dec. 4-5, 2025, in Washington, DC
  - *Brainstorming with AI in Small Law*, Jennifer Lucas-Ross with Jessica Vanto (Seward & Kessel) and Ian Nelson (Hotshot Legal)
  - Shannon DeGennaro and Melissa Forsey-Schwind were both on the 2025 Conference Planning Committee
- Lateral Recruiting Summit, January 21, 2026, New York, NY
  - Sheryl Roberts is serving on the Lateral Recruiting Summit Planning Committee.
- NALP Bulletin—The following articles authored on behalf of our Interest Group have been accepted and/or published:
  - *The Impact of the Age of FOMO on Recruiting for Small and Mid-Size Law Firms* by Sheryl Roberts and Katie Green (published November 2025)
  - *Boldly Go into the Talent Frontier: Tips on Transitioning from the Courtroom to the Talent Strategy Room* by Robert De Toni (published December 2025)
  - *D-I-Y PD (Do-It-Yourself Professional Development): How to Build Lawyer PD Programs on a Budget* by Jennifer Lucas-Ross (expected February 2026)
  - *Using takeaways from the 2L recruiting season to assist small/mid-sized firms when planning for recruitment* by Katie Greene (expected March 2026)
- Annual Education Conference, Apr. 14-17, 2026 in Hollywood, FL—the following RFPs were on behalf of our Interest Group were accepted.
  - *Beyond the Big Law Blueprint: Recruiting Strategies for Small & Mid-Sized Firms*, Melissa Forshey Schwind, Kasey Fenn, Katie Greene, Halle Sabo

We continue to receive outreach and interest in our group from law firms, law schools, vendors, and others who are members of or connected to NALP. There is strong interest in hearing insights and feedback from small to mid-size law firms with respect to our industry. The law schools in particular are interested, and we continue to invite them to meetings and collaborate with them where possible.

We will continue to promote our new Interest Group through information sharing, education, and leadership over the coming year.