

Memorandum

To: Fred Thrasher, Deputy Director of NALP
Tom Maligno, NALP Board Liaison
NALP Board of Directors

From: Cinnamon A. Baker at Barry University School of Law, Chair of Solo & Small CSO Section

Date: October 17, 2011

Re: NALP Quarterly Section Report for Solo & Small CSO Section

This report summarizes the various activities that the NALP Solo & Small CSO Section has engaged since the June report provided to the Board.

Section Communication

- On August 17th Tom Maligno facilitated a conference call with Marcy Cox, section member Dena Bauman, and me. The discussion was stimulated by concerns vocalized by Dena (as a representative of similarly situated section members) about the apparently large time commitment involved with the new ABA Questionnaire employment data entry process. The call resulted in recognition of the concerns and that they would be addressed to the best of NALP's ability, but that the situation is uncharted territory and calls for a diplomatic approach.
- On September 14th I sent a recap of the section's quarterly conference call. With assistance from Vice Chair, Michelle Jackson, I also included links to the ABA Memo about the Questionnaire changes. I also encouraged section members to respond to the request about how school's collect employment data from Mina Jackson, of the Employment Task Force. Finally, I reiterated that the NALP leadership is supportive of our section's unique needs.
- On September 21st I submitted a memo to Mina Jackson for the Employment Task Force with a combined response from several members regarding their employment data collection tactics. I also included specific feedback from one section member who had completed the graduate data entry for the online ABA Questionnaire and was aware of issues with the system. It appears the ABA addressed some of the issues as a few (though not all) were no longer present by the time I entered my own data about two weeks later.

Conference call

A 55 minute conference call was held on Wednesday, September 14th, 2011. Approximately 17 members and our Board Liaison, Tom Maligno, participated. After a relatively discussion about the Federal Agency Project (*see below*), the primary topic of conversation was the NALP/ABA Questionnaire and the uncertainty of how the process would unfold.

Environmental Scan

During the conference call I posed a question to the member participants:

What are your concerns about the ABA employment reporting changes?

- Many members had not yet discussed the new process with their dean at the time of the call. Moreover, many members were mistakenly under the impression that the Class of 2010 data would not be entered at this time. Discussion ensued about the possibility of the schools (not NALP) requesting an extension from the ABA.
- Members discussed with each other about the perennial challenges of gathering employment data from recent graduates, especially obtaining salary numbers. The focus of the “transparency movement” is that schools are misrepresenting salary data by cross-contaminating data between legal and non-legal fields. But, salary information is usually the least robust data set.
- One member has talked with her state’s bar to explore creating incentives to report to schools. For example, providing ½ credit of ethics CLE if the grad fully completes the ERSS. There might be a consortium of schools that pursue this idea.
- Tom M. (as always!) reassured the section members that he voices our concerns to the NALP Board, and that NALP will do its best to assist the school members and maintain the highly valuable data gathering process it has established over the decades. It was mentioned that NALP intends to mirror the ERSS with the ABA Questionnaire.
- Several members voiced that they perceive a lack of understanding by the majority of the membership (school and firm) regarding how high the staff to student ratio is to career services professionals (i.e., how few staff members are actually in the departments of the members in this section—many have only one). The idea of membership education about the section was raised and supported.

The next section call will occur in early January.

Section Presentations

From the seven RFPs submitted by the Solo & Small CSO Section, one was accepted for presentation at the 2012 conference.

- Not all Employer Outreach is EQUAL! Navigating Public Service Employer Outreach.
Lead: Danielle Sorken

Another section RFP, while not accepted as a conference program, will be reframed and developed into a webinar for the benefit of the full membership (per NALP request).

- Extending Your Reach: Empowering Deans and Administrators to be CSO Advocates and Allies. Lead: Holly Brajich and Markeisha Miner. These section members are currently working to create a NALP email inquiry/survey to gain data from the membership to fine tune their webinar.

Federal Agency Resource Project and Beyond

The a/k/a Federal Outreach Project, a/k/a Federal Employer Project, a/k/a Federal Recruiting Project, is a work group that has been led by Tasha Everman during a reassessment phase. This project is riddled with issues.

As for gathering the data, many government agencies are under hiring freezes that limits the agency staff size, which in turn hinders our ability to gather information. Many agencies are in a restructuring process or funding reassessment, the outcome of which could likely make the data we gather irrelevant within a short period of time. Regarding the data assembly, the platform for the answers from the agencies is uncertain (whether Excel, a database in a cloud, etc.), yet we know the information will be extensive and whatever the structure the full membership must have access. How that would occur is another primary concern (e.g., would it be managed by NALP or a section member; how would we ensure that the access is available to all but protected as well; what about costs to keep the software updated; how much time value would the section members be able to allocate to create; how much time would be required to keep the information updated so it remains a credible resource, etc.).

In other words, the idea is formidable but there are fundamental, persistent obstacles to getting the project moving. At this time the Federal Agency Project is *on freeze*. I will encourage the next section leader to reassess and consider the viability of the project for this section.

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