

NALP Small/Solo Section Quarterly Report

To: Andrew Chapin, NALP Board Liaison to Small/Solo
From: Jennifer Zwagerman, NALP Small/Solo Section Chair
CC: Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director
Date: October 16, 2014

The fall semester has started off busy for all of us I'm sure, and particularly now in the Small/Solo CSO Section as we have added working with 1Ls to our responsibilities. It has been fairly active on NALP Connect, and it continues to be our main tool to ask questions and share information within the group. We also had a great conference call this past week, with good numbers despite the last minute decision to hold one. We also had a call at the end of July which continued our active discussion regarding the ABA protocol, and also touched on other topics, at noted below.

A. RFPS

As noted in the last report, our Section submitted nine RFPs for the Chicago conference. I'm excited to report that four have been selected. Those four include"

a. **Employer Outreach: Part-time Strategies When It's Not Your Full-time Job**

Although the employment market has increased the importance of employer outreach to all law schools, most career services offices do not have a single person solely dedicated to this effort. The reality is that most of us must juggle this very important work with other advising and administrative responsibilities. This program will explore specific techniques and tools law school career services professionals can use to block time for employer outreach, identify and prioritize employers for outreach, and identify opportunities for collaboration with others at the law school. **Chris Smith, Erin Guruli, Cinnamon Baker**

b. **Ending Reporting Nightmares: Collecting Information You Need Before You Need It**

In addition to its heavily scrutinized employment outcomes report, the law school career service portfolio also includes numerous other responsibilities; student and alumni counseling, programs, employer outreach, etc. A wide range of audiences and stakeholders including parent universities, state, regional and professional accrediting bodies, the media, prospective students and even political entities want information on our activities - often on extremely short notice. How can we find time to collect, analyze and produce relevant, useful data? How can we be more efficient and pro-active in reporting? How can we use our data to advocate for ourselves to these stakeholders? Learn concrete strategies from a panel of experienced CSO administrators. **Dena Bauman, Estelle Gaerig Winsett, Patricia Hodny, Joe Patrick**

c. **Navigating Cross Currents: Challenges and Opportunities in Partnerships Between Career Services and Externship Departments**

Career services offices and externship programs often find themselves overlapping at

law schools, but the differing missions of these departments can create tensions and challenges for those on both sides, as well as creating opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. In this presentation we will explore best practices for career services offices to work with their externship programs and better communicate between offices to give students the widest possible range of opportunities to gain legal experience.

Courtney Key, Cecily Becker, Amanda Rivas, Suzanne Hill Patrick

d. **Putting the “PRO” in Professional Development – Tactics for Maximizing Outcomes in PD Curricula and Programming**

You have obtained the green light from your Dean and faculty for a professional development curriculum or program. Now what? This panel will provide an open forum to discuss how to effectively navigate the vast sea of options when it comes to law student professional development. Be a part of this honest conversation on what is working with law students and what continues to present challenges. We will exchange ideas on how to effectively collaborate with faculty, employers, alumni and other resources to get the most leverage for your time and program and to maximize student buy-in. **Lauren Donald, Tasha Everman, Christine Guard**

B. Bulletin Articles

Maria Comas, our Vice-Chair for articles, worked hard to solicit proposals for this upcoming year. We have four articles from our section being published this year. The first was in September (Need for Rural Attorneys by Jennifer Zwagerman) and we also have upcoming articles by Jennifer Powell (November), Suzanne Patrick (December) and Samantha Coyne & Maria Comas (May).

C. Webinars

We are still hoping to have a webinar or two for our section. Likely shorter webinars, a few topics were identified during the RFP process that would make good webinars moving forward. Sonja Hayes is our Vice-Chair and coordinator for this project. One suggested topic has been rural practice initiatives, but that is only a tentative idea at this point.

D. Conference Calls

We have had two section calls since the last report. The first, at the end of July, continued our active discussion regarding the ABA protocol. We also discussed how various schools handle missed OCI deadlines and student requests for late applications. The most recent call, just this week, focused on issues we've been seeing early this year. OCI employer numbers have been generally steady, but we're seeing the interview season stretch out further into the semester. Across the country, we are also noticing lower student interest and participation in OCI. Lots of issues with meeting deadlines from students, even if CDOs prod and remind. Discussion regarding 10+% drops in bar passage rates occurred, as that has been seen in a number of states where results have already been released, and there was thoughts that lower MBE scores nationwide could be attributed in part to the stress and anxiety caused by the ExamSoft debacle on the first day of the exam. We had some talk about programming, and we're going to be starting a discussion on NALPConnect regarding online/video programming, as this is something

a number of schools are looking at, and perhaps even the possibility of sharing some of these programs with other schools (saving time and effort). A majority of the call was dedicated to discussing Long Range Planning.

E. Others News/Events

Our NALP Connect Board remains one of the best resources for sharing information and news. We are going to be working over the next few months to expand our resource section, including perhaps a section of online resources and programs that members are willing to share (particularly specialized topics where we have interest from students, but perhaps not enough to create a whole program). There are a lot of concerns overall within our section regarding reduced resources and the impact on outreach and programming, and also reduced resources in terms of time as we are having increased administrative duties added as well as seeing increased alumni use of our offices, but no decrease in student programming and counseling, and even potentially reduced staff in already small offices. A big focus of our Long Range Planning discussion was talking about ways that NALP can help meet some of these demands and stresses, while also thinking that it is possible, with decreasing enrollment, we may see more and more schools losing administrative staff and becoming Small/Solo CSOs as well. One thing that would be helpful, as we try to ensure that we do reach everyone, is an update from NALP as to the various school members, and a way to determine if they have 3 or fewer professionals. For those schools that are not members of the section, we would like to reach out to them.