



**Fall 2019**

# **BOARD OUTREACH SUMMARY**

Related to the 2019 Recruiting Cycle



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After the 2019 recruiting cycle and before their November meeting, NALP's Board members conducted outreach calls to members across the country. Board members were particularly interested in talking to members and hearing their impressions after this first season with the new NALP Principles for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process in place. They asked members to respond to the following questions about the recent recruiting cycle:

*Our Board outreach for the November meeting has always included a question about the most recent recruiting cycle. Like past years we would be interested to hear your observations, generally on how the cycle went this year. We recognize the revisions to the Principles might have played a part in some change, and we would be interested to hear how things were different from years past.*

#### **FOR LAW SCHOOLS**

*Have you seen any change in interest for counseling or general job search questions from 1Ls? If there has been increased interest, how are you handling the volume? Have you put new programs or procedures in place for 1L counseling during the first semester of school? Has there been any change in firms wanting to reach out to 1Ls earlier?*

#### **FOR LEGAL EMPLOYERS**

*If your firm recruits 1Ls, either for diversity fellowships or general 1L programs, have you changed your process in light of the revisions to the Principles?*

## Board members noted several themes in their conversations with members:

### INCREASED SPEED

Nationally, almost everyone reported a faster and more compressed recruiting season. Both employers and students seemed to make decisions faster (regardless of the timelines for offer acceptance). Some members expressed concern that students did not take or have the time for informed decision making, although many firms expressed a willingness to offer extensions if asked. Many firms reported giving out offers as early as June and wrapping up their recruiting season by mid-to-late August. Some school members reported that the faster fall recruiting season spawned a longer fall counseling season that involved meeting with and encouraging still seeking 2Ls and 3Ls and meeting with some 1Ls earlier than before. Some school members also noted some OCI visits continuing into the fall.

In the Mid-Atlantic region, some schools reported two waves of offers and that some firms came back for a second wave of interviews leading to more opportunities for some students.

### UNPREDICTABLE YIELDS & PRECRUITING

Some members reported higher yields, while others reported lower yields. Some believed this was the result of vigorous precruiting by some employers in some markets. Where some larger firms under-hired, other firms had more acceptances than anticipated resulting in an oversubscribed summer associate class. Members speculated that some firms had reduced their summer class size in anticipation of a recession. Because of some firms' changes in their prior recruiting patterns, firm members reported historical yield information was not necessarily helpful in predicting current yield results. Many law schools reported an increase in precruiting activities. These schools also noted that many students entered OCI with an

offer (or offers) already in hand, which led to some firms canceling their OCI schedules because they had already (or mostly) filled their summer classes.

- In the Mid-Atlantic region, some schools reported an increase in small and regional employers participating in OCI compared to the past.
- In the Mid-Atlantic region, some schools noted that some firms indicated that they expected to fill summer classes by precruting going forward.
- In the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions, some employer members reported that the OCI applicant pool felt diminished by precruting.
- In the Southeast region, schools reported no significant change in recruiting activities.
- In the Northeast region, both school and firm members expressed dissatisfaction with early interviewing as it cuts into summer programs at firms and into the 1L summer for schools and students and gives less time for both students and employers to prepare for interviews.
- In the Northeast region, some firms reported filling 40-50% of their summer associates classes through recruiting prior to formal OCI programs.

## INCREASED COMMUNICATION

Across the country members reported more communication between students and employers — typically related to timing, extensions, and/or other outstanding offers, which was generally seen as a good result.



## REASONABLENESS

School members noted that firms were very reasonable (e.g. no reports of exploding offers) and worked with students to provide extensions. Smaller firms and offices emphasized the need for candidates to make decisions as soon as possible to prevent denying other students' offers.

## RECRUITING POLICIES AND MARKET DRIVERS

In general, firms followed schools' requested time frames for holding offers open. Some members reported that firms seemed to yield to schools' policy requests and other members reported that schools seemed to yield to firms' requests, evidencing a competitive market where each institution has to find its relative place. In some cases, individual firms treated some schools differently than others, and some schools approached various firms with various strategies. Many regions reported that the market was bifurcated, with some schools adopting a 28 day offer acceptance deadline and others settling on 14-21 day offer acceptance deadlines. Some schools decided to forgo a policy altogether to be flexible with firms. For the most part, firms followed stated school policies/guidelines for keeping offers open, though smaller firms and smaller offices of larger firms struggled with 28-day offer acceptance policies. Some of those smaller entities provided a 14-day offer acceptance deadline with the option to extend if necessary.

- In the Southeast region, many schools and firms worked within a 14-day offer response period (with some having a 21-day period).
- In the Southeast region, some schools felt that they experienced a loss in leverage for their students in negotiating with employers.
- In the Northeast region, many firms indicated that they would reduce the number of days they hold offers open next year.

- In the West/Rocky Mountain region, schools that adopted policies or recommendations on how long offers should be held open fell into two main camps: (1) higher ranked schools tended to ask for longer open-offer periods of 21-28 days; (2) lower ranked and regional schools asked for shorter open-offer periods in the range of two weeks.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Many members reported that they felt this year was a “wait and see/calm before the storm” year and that they anticipated more changes in the coming year. Some employer members questioned the ongoing value of OCI, given its time and opportunity costs when there are other avenues (e.g. pre recruiting, video interviews) to recruit the candidates they want.

- In the Northeast region, several schools reported a decrease in the numbers of OCI schedules and anticipate further decreases going forward.

## 1L RECRUITING

Some members expressed anxiety that employers were attempting to recruit 1Ls earlier and earlier. At the same time some employers have mentioned the possibility of increasing their 1L engagement/recruiting activities to be in touch with students earlier. Members noted that many 2L students of color are not participating in the 2L recruitment process because they have obtained employment earlier or were returning to their 1L firm. Some members raised concerns about aggressive 1L recruiting distracting 1L students from their studies and potentially locking them into a position before they have an opportunity to explore all of their career options. Members noted that it is difficult for students to turn down an early job offer with the financial benefits and certainty it provides. Several members noted, however, that most 1L offers were not finalized until after first semester grades come out, and that

many employers waited until the second semester to recruit because of that. Members expressed some concern about a bifurcation of the market between people of color and others.

## 1L COUNSELING

Several schools saw the ability to engage with students earlier (than the prior October 15th date) as a positive development. These schools reported spreading out their communications, support of 1L career questions, and professional development activities throughout the fall, rather than having to complete it all in the late October/early November window. Schools also noted that earlier access and engagement with 1Ls allowed schools to capitalize on the enthusiasm of students who proactively sought out career service assistance in September.

- In the Mid-Atlantic region, most schools created policies and procedures around 1L counseling with career services offices with kick-off dates in September and October. Some set application kick-off dates in November and December.
- In the Southeast region, most schools continued to initiate 1L contact between October 1 and October 15.
- In the Northeast region, schools commented on the impact of the change in the 1L timing with respect to public interest employment opportunities and concerns about how best to assist students.

## OVERALL

Members seemed to agree that despite tremendous uncertainty about the first recruiting season without the timing guidelines in place, overall the process seemed to go very smoothly and for the most part unfolded as it had in the previous several years. School and employer members both reported that the upheaval many had anticipated did not materialize, although there is a sense that there are likely to be additional changes in the market in the 2020 recruitment cycle.

