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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Entry-level Law Firm Recruiting Survives Pandemic Interruptions, but Offer Rates, Number of Offers, and Average Summer Class Sizes All Fall

WASHINGTON, D.C. — While the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered the course of the 2020 law firm recruiting season, law firms, law schools, and law students have persevered, achieving a competitive summer 2021 recruiting season in winter 2021 instead of summer/fall 2020. The findings are part of NALP's *Perspectives on 2020-21 Law Student Recruiting* report, available at www.nalp.org/perspectivesonrecruiting. Because of the changes in timing of OCI for the 2020-21 recruiting cycle due to the pandemic, NALP's typical fall recruiting surveys were split into two collection timeframes, and the 2020-21 Perspectives report includes analysis from data collected in the fall 2020 Survey of Legal Employers on Summer Outcomes and First-Year Associate Plans and two spring 2021 Surveys of Law Schools and Legal Employers on 2020-21 Recruiting.

“Amidst the pandemic interruptions and uncertainties there was an overall net decline in recruiting activity,” explained NALP Executive Director James G. Leipold. “Schools reported fewer employers interviewing students for summer programs and law firms reported recruiting at fewer campuses for summer programs, and both median and average offer numbers fell.” Despite a year in which many large law firms saw increases in profitability, across almost all metrics NALP measured declines in recruiting activity.



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“Many large law firms reported significant revenue and profit gain figures for 2020, though at the onset of the pandemic there was considerable uncertainty about what the demand for legal services would be and how deeply the pandemic-recession would affect law firm bottom lines, which may account for some of the conservative approach firms seemed to have taken in shaping summer 2021 programs,” Leipold continued, adding that nearly all the 2020-21 recruiting cycle numbers need an asterisk or footnote to explain that they are not comparable to the data in the years that preceded 2020, or the years that follow.

“There is a story that emerges, however, despite the asterisks, and that is one of both resilience and caution. Firms made conservative decisions about future talent at a moment when the future was uncertain. In retrospect, some of those decisions may prove to have been too conservative, and indeed we see that some of the figures measured in this recruiting cycle approach some of the low water marks reached in the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession, but by flexing hard and leaning into a new timeline and new technology, large law firms and law schools were able to complete the annual dance of recruitment, offer, and acceptance, despite the syncopated rhythm that must have felt at times a bit like a game of musical chairs.”

Key Findings:

- For summer 2021, 53% of offices/firms planned to host an entirely virtual summer program, 34% planned a hybrid program with some in-person and some virtual components, 8% planned to host an entirely in-person program, and 5% had not yet determined their program format at the time of the survey. In summer 2020, 86% of all summer programs were virtual.
- The percentage of callback interviews that resulted in offers for 2021 summer programs fell to 50%, down from 51% the previous year. The yield on those offers jumped by nearly 5 full percentage points, to just over 41%, a figure eclipsed only by the yield of 43% measured in 2009.
- Overall, the median number of offers extended by offices/firms to second-year students for summer 2021 programs was 8 offers, down from a median of 11 offers for summer 2020. For employers reporting office-specific data, the median number of offers for summer 2021 was 7.



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- Students responded more swiftly to summer program offers this year. For summer 2021, firms received about 70% of offer responses within 14 days. For summer 2020, just 52% of responses were received in this same timeframe.
- In total, 42% of responding employers engaged in early offer activity for their summer 2021 programs, up 7 percentage points from last year. Collectively, 10.5% of all offers to second-year students for summer 2021 positions were made prior to the start of OCI. Firms were most likely to pursue top candidates and diverse candidates with early offers.
- Regionally, the Northeast had the highest percentage of employers engaging in early offer activity (49% of employers). The median number of early offers in the Northeast was 10, compared to a national median of 3 early offers.
- The extent to which firms recruited 3Ls fell to the second lowest figure ever measured with just 12% percent of offices reporting recruiting 3Ls, down from 15% last year. An all-time low of 3% was observed in 2009.
- Over three-quarters (76%) of law schools reported a decline of 5% or more in the number of employers participating in OCI (in-person or virtually) for summer 2021 as compared to summer 2020.

Read NALP's [*Perspectives on 2020-21 Law Student Recruiting report*](#).

About NALP

NALP is an association of more than 2,500 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That's why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and ethical principles for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For 50 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve. NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at www.nalp.org/pressreleases. For additional information, contact NALP at info@nalp.org or call (202) 835-1001.