



1220 19th Street NW, Suite 510

Washington, DC 20036-2405

Phone: (202) 835-1001

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Contacts: James G. Leipold, NALP Executive Director, jleipold@nalp.org

Danielle A. Taylor, NALP Director of Research, dtaylor@nalp.org

Phone: (202) 835-1001

Robust Entry-level Law Firm Recruiting Activity Reflects Broader Competition for Legal Talent

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NALP today released its *Perspectives on 2021 Law Student Recruiting* report, available at www.nalp.org/perspectivesonrecruiting. Industry data indicate that 2021 was another banner year financially for law firms, the most profitable year since before the Great Recession, with the strongest growth in demand for legal services since before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. NALP's findings show that fall 2021 recruiting activity was also strong following a year of more conservative hiring decisions early in the pandemic.

“Law firms have been scrambling for talent at both the lateral and entry levels. As a result, recruiting activity in 2021 was robust, with offer rates for summer spots reaching their highest mark since 2007,” writes NALP Executive Director James G. Leipold in the report. “The pandemic has changed some of the methodologies of the law firm recruitment process, but it has not dampened any of the competition. The OCI screening interview process is likely to remain virtual, or at least partially so, and 2L recruiting is likely to continue to happen early and fast. For 1Ls, recruiting is also likely to be robust, particularly for diversity fellowships, and with a little luck, the renewed energy around 3L recruiting will remain for some time.”

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Leipold adds that the increase in recruiting activity is unlikely to hold over the long term. “Tempering that fairly rosy picture is the inevitable boom and bust cycle of law firm profitability. This hot talent market will inevitably cool, one way or another.”

Key Findings: Fall 2021 Recruiting

- Overall, 53% of law schools reported an increase of more than 10% in the number of employers “on campus” (in person or virtually) recruiting 2Ls for summer 2022 positions as compared to summer 2021.
- In fall 2021, 58% of callback interviews resulted in offers for summer positions, the highest offer rate since 2007.
- In total, 73% of law offices reported making more offers for summer associate positions for summer 2022 as compared to summer 2021.
- The median number of offers extended by law offices to second-year students for summer 2022 programs was 10 offers, up from a median of 8 offers for summer 2021.
- Overall, 12.3% of all offers made by law firms were early offers made prior to the start of on-campus interviewing (OCI). This is also the highest figure measured since NALP began tracking early offers.
- In fall 2021, 28% of law offices reported that they reached out to schools to solicit more 2L candidates after the completion of the school’s OCI program, up from 14% last year.
- The extent to which firms recruited 3Ls in fall 2021 increased by 10 percentage points to 22% of offices, up from 12% last year.

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Key Findings: Summer 2021 Programs and Outcomes

- For summer 2021, 60% of law offices held a hybrid summer program with a mix of both in-person and virtual programming, 28% held an entirely virtual program, and 12% held an entirely in-person program.
- The average summer program class size in 2021 was 12, up from 11 in 2020.
- The offer rate coming out of summer 2021 programs remained near historic highs, with 97% of 2L summer associates receiving an associate offer. The acceptance rate to those offers was at an all-time high of 89%.
- The offer rate to 1L summer associates to return for a second summer also reached a historic high of 93%. The acceptance rate to those offers was 72%. Firms reported that overall, 55% of all 1L summer associates were diversity fellows.

Read NALP's [*Perspectives on 2021 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 more than 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.