



Programming Best Practices for Small and Solo Offices

NALP Small/Solo Section Working Group

This resource is designed to be an audit and evaluation tool as you determine your programming needs and goals. It is created as a checklist of things to consider in the planning, development, delivery, and assessment of your programs.

Step 1: Consider Your Annual Programming Schedule

Identify the main topics you want to cover each year:

- Consider annual vs. rotating schedule of some programs.
- Identify class-level vs. general student programming (example: 1L specific).
- Do you target programming based on current student interests?
- Utilize survey/questionnaire to poll students to see where their practice interest lies.

Self-audit what programming you already offer:

- Does your CDO/CSO programming meet the main topics you want to cover?
 - Identify improvements or modifications from the previous offering.
- Are there topics that have been neglected that you would like to incorporate?
- Are there existing programs on the school-wide calendar that incorporate these topics?
 - Orientation.
 - Professionalism training.
 - Student Organization events involving career development.
 - Classes with relevant subject matter, such as negotiating, bar prep.

Examine the best timing for the programming:

- A best practice is high-population days that hopefully have a window in between or overlapping with classes.
- To consider:
 - Are you relegated to certain days or times of the week due to classes or student presence on campus?
 - Lunch can work, but often that is their only down time of the day.
 - Do you have a large commuter or working population?

Manage expectations for students and staff:

- New programs may face pushback at first until they become the norm.
- Get buy-in to set the tone that the programming is part of the students' legal education/professional development.

Step 2: Consider Individual Program Development

How to deliver:

- In person vs. remote vs. asynchronous or hybrid: different subjects and panels may call for different formats.
 - Having a Zoom option allows for recording easily and allows students attending remotely to participate.
- Can your website and CMS be used as forms of “just in time” or “as needed” programming?
 - Example: www.drake.edu/law/careers/resourcesforstudents
 - Create checklists and highlight resources with [Pathways](#) on Symplicity.

Who should deliver:

- Format: CDO/CSO office, office + outside presenters, panel of outside presenters + CDO/CSO moderator.
- Is this a good opportunity to collaborate with others?
 - Student Services.
 - Student Organizations.
 - University Counseling Center (well-being).
 - Academics: Can you jump on board with an existing class or program for ease of scheduling at a set time while also showing the subject matter is important to the University as a whole and not just CDO (e.g., DEI, Well-being, Professionalism)?
 - State Bar organizations for networking.

Core values or principles:

- Equitable representation of practice areas.
- Equitable representation of attorneys.
- Student Well-Being
 - Personal
 - Running or Walking Clubs as forms of socialization, fellowship, and networking.
 - Walking meetings with students is good for initial meetings or when you don't need a computer.

- Professional
 - Presentations from the state’s LAP, Student Affairs representative to speak about resources.

Program accessibility:

- Are your programs and resources (location, audio/visual, tools, handouts, etc.) accessible to individuals with disabilities?
 - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines: www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21

Your office’s tools and resources:

- What is your competency with tools and technology, either in person or remote?
 - If your office does not have the competency, is there an ally who does?
- What visuals do you use? Are there others to consider?
 - PowerPoint, Prezi, others.

Marketing and promotion:

- Internal
 - Flyers
 - Digital TVs or screens
 - Newsletter-digital and/or hard-copies
 - Emails
 - How often?
 - Text Messages
 - Individual or system-generated?
 - Social media
 - Whose account?
 - How often?
 - Use marketing department or does CDO generate?
 - Will incentives be used to help promote the event?
- Branding
 - Does your school’s communications office have resources/can they help produce advertising materials?
 - Does your office have access to graphics or other tools to make your signage recognizable and attractive?
 - Can you create categories of programs so that students know what to expect? For instance, Career Exploration vs. Skill Building.

Attendance:

- Required/Mandatory
 - How do you message mandatory events?
- Voluntary/Begging
- Will you use food or other incentives?
- By asking students to RSVP to an otherwise voluntary event, that can help raise their commitment to showing up.
 - Capping attendance can sometimes generate a healthy competition to sign up.
- Do you require registration via 12twenty or Symplicity? Other ways to anticipate attendance for ordering food, decide on space.
 - By posting all events on your CSM, they will see other upcoming events even if only passively.
 - If someone registers for an event, consider also sending an Outlook invitation to make sure it gets on their calendar.

Participation and feedback:

- Sometimes providing students with help to come up with questions at programs with speakers can help.
 - Table tents with questions and topics of conversation.
 - Handouts with speaker bios along with possible questions.
- Can you promote or encourage participation in other ways?
 - Live panel with small break-out tables/rooms to promote conversation.
- Get students involved in the planning to create buy-in.
 - Student Bar Association or State Bar Association student members creating events with the law school.
 - One example was Breakfast with the Bar once a month.
 - Others might include post-work social events with the young lawyer or young professional divisions in your bar/area.
- Are you able to do any internal assessment of your programs?
 - Qualitative vs Quantitative — is it about exposure, attendance, contacts?
- Do you ask for feedback from participants directly or through your CSM?

We extend our sincere thanks to NALP for supporting our Working Group.