

## Extended Division Student Career Development Tips and Timeline

As an Extended Division Student, you bring specialized skills, extensive job experience, and a unique perspective to the law school community. These qualities often become your most valuable assets as you transition to legal employment.

If you would like to transition into a legal position following graduation and maximize your skills and experience, it is important that you commit to:

- 1) revising your job application documents on a regular basis to conform with legal industry standards;
- 2) gaining new job search and interviewing skills for the legal employment market;
- 3) extending your professional network to include attorneys, faculty, legal professionals, and fellow classmates;
- 4) obtaining some form of legal experience (in a for credit, non-credit, paid, volunteer, short-term/project-based, or long-term position); and
- 5) educating yourself on the typical legal hiring timetable.

### Revising your Job Application Documents:

It is important to showcase your transferable skills in your job application documents. In order to do so effectively, spend time throughout your **1ED year** reflecting on how you would like to use your legal and non-legal skills and experience. Would you like to continue working for your corporation? Are you passionate about a cause or determined to serve your community? Would you like to improve your financial profile? How you answer these basic questions and others will form your job search and suggest the best ways to market your skills and experience to a legal employer. If you need assistance with navigating the self-reflection process, schedule an appointment with a Career Development counselor. The earlier you meet with our office, the earlier you can begin to strategize and position yourself for future success.

As you move through self-reflection, you'll begin to see ways you can maximize your skills and experience in your resume and cover letters. For example:

- As you begin enrolling in elective law classes, consider creating a "Relevant Coursework" subheading under Education on your resume. Highlight a few select courses which reflect your current practice area interests;
- Use active "legal" verbs in your resume job descriptions and in your cover letter;
- Avoid over-use of industry lingo. Remember, employers may be unfamiliar with the nuances of your current line of work. Instead, distill your job duties down to coveted job competencies (writing, research, project management, analysis, leadership, communication, management, innovation, time management, effective cost-saving strategies, business/client development);

- Use the legal resume model, which focuses on less formatting and fewer bullet points;
- Think of your resume and cover letters as mini-writing samples. They should be flawless AND persuasive;
- Tailor your cover letter to show how your education and experience match the employer's job description. Identify and convey accomplishments that demonstrate your fit for the position.

### **Gaining new Job Search and Interviewing Skills:**

Essentially, the legal job search is a three-part process: 1) applying to internal and external job boards, participating in scheduled on/off-campus interview programs, and attending job fairs for available positions; 2) proactively targeting employers that align with your career/practice area interests (even if the employer has not posted a job advertisement); and 3) networking extensively with legal and non-legal professionals.

Given your circumstances, you may not be able to interview for full-time legal employment during the school year or in the summer. However, as will be discussed in a later section, with careful planning, you may be able to add short-term or part-time legal employment to your resume. Therefore, gaining an understanding of the legal job search process and refining your interviewing skills should begin when you are a **1ED and 2ED** so you can strategize and get ready to take advantage of potential opportunities.

Initially, it is recommended that you review our [Complete Guide to the Legal Job Search Process](#) and meet with a career counselor to discuss specific legal careers and the search process. During these meetings, we will describe our career development and recruitment services. We also will help you craft a job search timeline and networking plan that fits your career goals.

Once your job search plan starts to take shape, we recommend you invest time in sharpening your interview skills. To be successful in a legal interview you must demonstrate poise, be persuasive, and tell "your story" in a concise manner. You must be able to "connect the dots" between your selling points and the employer's bottom line in a convincing manner. It will require you to research your interviewer and potential employer, and to develop potential questions in advance. To help improve your skills, we offer:

- mock interviews with your career counselor;
- assistance in developing and practicing your "elevator pitch";
- interview workshops.

### **Extending your Professional Network**

The legal profession is built on relationships. Therefore, the importance of networking to your job search should not be underestimated. Your ability to network—to make and sustain productive relationships—is not just a job search tool. Consistent networking will catapult your career, improve your leadership opportunities, keep you on the cutting edge of your field, and support you during lean seasons.

That said, it is imperative that you budget time to connect. This won't require a huge commitment--just that you remain consistent. Your networking targets should include attorneys, faculty, legal professionals, local and national leaders, and fellow classmates. Develop a practice of reaching out to professional contacts, renewing friendships and welcoming new associations on a regular basis.

How can you squeeze in an extra 15 - 30 minutes/week to productively network? Most activities don't require a huge time commitment. Consider:

- getting involved in student bar association groups;
- requesting an Alumni Mentor as a 1ED student;
- attending CDO workshops to mingle with practicing attorneys;
- scheduling evening career counseling sessions to discuss where and how to expand your network;
- attending on-campus attorney CLE programs – free to students;
- joining your local bar association as a student member, and attending events/mixers;
- leaving your office a bit early to attend an interesting law school or community program;
- developing a vibrant LinkedIn presence including joining relevant legal groups, bar associations, and legal thought leaders;
- using your day off to invite attorneys, classmates, and other contacts for a quick bite to eat;
- scheduling weekly, monthly or quarterly check-in calls with your recommenders and other important contacts.

### **Obtaining Legal Experience**

As a best practice, aim to obtain some legal experience while in law school. Depending on your career goals, you might think about gaining short-term experience as early as the summer after your first year of law school. For most extended division students, this will not be practical. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean you should wait until graduation to leap into finding legal employment. Every legal experience, whether it is short- or long-term, will help build a solid foundation for your career. The following activities are just a few examples of how you can add legal experience or law-related transferable work to your resume.

- Seek law-related projects with your current employer;
- Compete for Moot Court and Law Journal Memberships;
- Work as a Research Assistant for a faculty member during the semester/summer. These are often remote opportunities where you can set your own hours;
- Reach out to sole practitioners and small law firms seeking assistance with discrete projects;
- Check with our Public Interest Resource Center (PIRC) for pro-bono opportunities with non-profits and government agencies. The American Bar Association also lists organizations with potential [pro bono opportunities](#) for law students, some of which can be handled remotely;

- Depending on your work benefits and financial situation, consider asking your current employer for a summer sabbatical to obtain a full-time internship, or save vacation time to take a short leave of absence;
- Participate in one of Delaware Law School's robust clinical programs (Veteran's Law Clinic and Environmental Law Clinic often have projects that fit an Extended Division student's schedule);
- Write a publishable paper on a subject of interest.

### **Educating Yourself on the Legal Hiring Timetable**

Maintaining good grades and a positive attitude while meeting serious obligations such as raising a family, paying a mortgage, and holding a full-time job demonstrate grit, work ethic and perseverance. These attributes will serve you well in the job market. In addition, you must get into position to succeed by educating yourself early and often about the hiring practices of typical legal employers. We have created a Student Timetable and Current Hiring Timetable of Legal Employers to assist you. It is also very important that you read all of the Career Development Office emails, even if you think you are unable to take on additional work. Deadlines can be inflexible in the legal industry so you'll want to make sure that you are tracking them closely.

Please note that if you are interested in:

- **Large corporate firms:** Some of these firms accept applications from 1EDs as summer associates (particularly for diversity fellowships) in the late fall/early winter (historically, December has been a popular month to begin applying). However, more opportunities are available for summer associate positions in the summer before your 4ED year. **Please note that to be eligible for these positions you would need to apply in the late spring/early summer before your 3ED year. Some of these firms will accept applications from rising 2EDs but it is recommended that you reach out to your targeted firm to ascertain if they would consider your application in a 1L or 2L pool.** If offered a position, you'd be expected to work full-time anywhere from 6 – 12 weeks (as set by the firm) during the summer months.
- **Smaller and medium sized firms** usually hire in the spring for summer internship opportunities. For post-graduate attorney positions, hiring can occur anytime in your 4ED year. Significant hiring takes place in the spring of your 4ED year and following the release of bar results in the late fall.
- **Judges** bring on students for judicial internship (no class credit)/externship (for credit) during the school year and in the summers. Hiring for opportunities for post-graduate judicial clerkships with **state appellate courts** occurs early, sometimes two years before graduation. It is recommended that you consult the Vermont Guide to State Judicial Clerkships in your 1ED year to determine the timeline of your targeted Court. **State trial judges** generally begin accepting applications for judicial clerkships the summer before your 4ED year. Federal court judges hire their judicial law clerks early, sometimes years in advance. Recently the federal courts have piloted a [Law Clerk Hiring Plan](#) that

outlines the current timeline for federal court applications. This plan is often updated by the Court so it is recommended that you consult this site frequently for the latest hiring protocols.