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Summer Options for First Year Law Students

I. Summer Legal Position

Many 1Ls opt to work in legal summer jobs to gain legal experience and begin exploring career options. Although it is not critical that you have a legal job during your 1L summer, it is recommended so that you can start exploring various legal practice areas and setting.

As you explore career options, it is important to keep in mind what is best for you and not your friends, classmates, or family members. There is a wide range of career options available to law school graduates and it is important to take the time to discover your niche. Some students are able to do this very early on in the process, but for many career planning takes much longer. Remember that career planning is a process and not a single event. In addition, career planning is not a one-size-fits-all process. What works for one person may not work for another person.

Students who are sure about the legal area that they want to pursue should target jobs that will help them demonstrate their commitment to that area, as well as develop legal knowledge and personal contacts in that area.

While there are many legal opportunities for 1L students, **there are few paying positions**. Opportunities at law firms tend to be limited for 1Ls because law firm employers are focused on hiring 2Ls. The majority of 1L students who find legal work obtain internships with judges, government agencies or public interest organizations. Due to the nature of government and public interest funding, most of these opportunities are unpaid. Depending on whether the internship is full-time or part-time, students may be able to combine the position with paid non-legal work, or summer law classes here, at other U.S. law schools, or abroad.

II. Summer Classes

Some students choose to take classes in order to get required courses done, or simply to have a lighter load and more flexibility in the fall semester.

III. Study Abroad

Some students study abroad after their first year of law school in order to travel, meet students from other law schools, and also obtain credits. This option is expensive and may require private loans to fund, but this may be the last opportunity for this type of travel before beginning a legal career. Some programs offer legal work experience as part of the program. Those interested in doing legal work abroad must make sure that their study abroad program offers that option, since it is difficult to secure legal positions abroad without the support of these programs.

Resources and directories are available online at <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/studyabroad/abroad.html>.

Those seeking to take courses at other law schools or abroad must obtain letters of good standing from Dean Angela Baker (see the form on the Student Life webpage, <http://camlaw.rutgers.edu/site/studentaffairs/>) and must have the courses approved by the Committee on Academic Petitions (email Dean Beckerman, johnbeck@camden.rutgers.edu). Transcripts must be sent to Maureen Murphy Aguilar (aguilar@camden.rutgers.edu).

IV. Summer Non-Legal Job

Although we strongly recommend that students obtain summer legal employment, not doing so should not significantly restrict your future options. Nevertheless, students are urged to take this time to begin exploring their options and obtaining legal experience.

Symlicity Accounts

Symlicity is an internet based program that the Office of Career Planning uses to deliver a number of our web services. Students can review job postings and apply for jobs, RSVP for events, sign up for mock interviews, apply to employers participating in our on campus recruiting programs and sign up for interviews, obtain contact information for judges for judicial internship and clerkship applications, and upload resumes and cover letters for counselor review. All students are assigned a Symlicity account the November of their first year. Account access information will be emailed to you in the beginning of November.

Finding jobs & applying

I. Job Listings

Check Symlicity job listings on the Career Planning webpage <https://law.camden-rutgers-csm.symlicity.com/students> (click on jobs/resume collection) for various types of job openings, and PSLawnet.org for public interest and government positions, but be aware that *only about 20% of all job openings are advertised*.

II. Direct targeted mailings

Since most job openings are not advertised, use Martindale Hubbell, martindale.com, and the NALP Directory, nalpdirectory.com, to research law firms for direct mailings to firms that did not post a job opening. You can search on the NALP directory for law firms that

hire 1Ls. Be aware that the NALP directory is not a comprehensive database of all legal employers and contains primarily large law firms and some government organizations.

Use PsLawnet.org to research government and public interest organizations and the Government Honors & Internship website (linked on the Career Planning website at <https://camlaw.rutgers.edu/site/i-students/cservices/gov.shtml>) for government and public interest organizations for direct mailings to employers that did not post a job opening and to view job listings.

Use Symplicity (under “Clerkships”) to obtain contact information on judges for judicial internship applications.

III. Networking

Networking is the process of establishing links with individuals in a position to connect you with the job you want. While networking does require more effort on your part, it is the single most effective way to land a job. Networking takes time, so start early and take advantage of these and other networking opportunities:

- Career Planning Fall & Spring Symposiums (our Spring Symposium is schedule for Saturday 1/26/08)
- Career Planning mock interview program in the early Spring semester
- Bar Associations events & memberships
- Informational interviews
- Career Planning’s Mentor Program
- Dinners and events sponsored by the law school and student organizations

IV. How to apply

Most positions just require a resume and cover letter, often followed by interviews. Some positions require writing samples. In some agencies, the odds are improved by a personal visit.

Other Methods of Obtaining Legal Experience

I. School Year Positions

There are far fewer applicants during the school year so the competition is not as high as it can be for some summer positions. A school year position is an excellent way to gain legal experience and build your professional network and may even turn into a summer position or a permanent post graduation job offer.

II. Law School Pro Bono Programs, Clinics & Externships

Law school pro bono programs, clinics and externships offer excellent ways to get legal experience and develop professional contacts. You can begin taking advantage of law school pro bono opportunities now. For most clinics and externships, you must have completed two-thirds of your legal education and have taken Evidence and Professional Responsibility.

For more information on these programs go to <http://www.camlaw.rutgers.edu/site/main/ourprograms.shtml>

Job Search Timeline

Note: With some exceptions, most legal employers that hire 1Ls begin their hiring process in the Spring semester. The exceptions are large law firms, federal judges and some government agencies.

November:

- Attend Career Planning first year professionalism hours
- Draft a resume and upload it to Symplicity
- Begin researching employers/positions

December:

- Students interested in interning for a federal judge or working at a large law firm should apply beginning on December 1
- Apply to government agencies with early deadlines
- If interested in public interest or public service positions, register for the Public Interest/Public Service job fair (PIPS)
- If looking for positions out of this area, try to set up informational interviews or meetings in the targeted geographic area, and start networking

January/February:

- Continue researching positions and applying
- Apply to small and mid-sized law firms, public interest agencies, government organizations, state trial judges
- Update any applications you sent in December with transcripts when they become available

March/April/May:

- Follow-up by phone or e-mail
- Explore alternatives if preferred job has not materialized

Types of Positions

Realistically, it is difficult for 1Ls to know which legal jobs to target until first-semester grades are reported. Some positions have strict hiring requirements. Other positions are more flexible. Summer positions may be volunteer or paid, full or part-time. Some government agencies and public interest organizations may have limited funding for summer law students. However, funding availability varies from year to year depending on the agency's budget. Information on limited summer funding sources can be found on the Career Planning website at <https://camlaw.rutgers.edu/site/i-students/cservices/summerfunding.shtml>.

A list of typical 1L positions follows:

I. Volunteer opportunities

Judicial Internships: Students who are interested in litigation or just learning more about the judicial system should consider volunteering full or part-time for a state or federal judge. This is a great opportunity to learn about the inner workings of the court system, and to observe trials first-hand. Interns usually get an opportunity to write memos to the judge

under the supervision of the judge's clerk, and will be able to see examples of good and bad briefs and oral arguments. These internships provide good opportunities to meet attorneys, and to develop contacts for 2L summer jobs. You can find contact information for some state (NJ, PA, DE) and all federal judges in your Symplicity account under "Clerkships". For most other states, you can find contact information on that state's judiciary website.

Prosecutor, District Attorney, U.S. Attorney and Public Defender: These offices are responsible for prosecuting and defending persons accused of crimes at the municipal, state and federal level. Interns assist attorneys in preparing for trial, which may include interviewing or prepping witnesses or defendants, writing and researching memos on legal issues, observing trials, preparing paperwork for court, and discussing cases with attorneys and investigators.

Public Interest Legal Organizations: These non-profit organizations are generally involved in advocating for a specific cause or population through legislation, lobbying or directly assisting individual clients or groups. Legal Services, ACLU, Women's Law Project, Gay & Lesbian Rights, Homeless Advocacy, Friends of Farmworkers, and the Community Health Law Project are some of the organizations involved in public interest law. Interns may conduct client intake interviews, perform legal research and writing on specific issues, attend hearings or trials with attorneys, complete paperwork for cases, and assist attorneys in preparing for trials. *Some of these agencies have limited funding for summer law student positions.*

Attorney General, City Solicitor, County Counsel, and other federal, state, county, or local government agencies with attorneys: These offices handle civil cases for governments and are usually set up similar to the structure of a large law firm. Cases may include employment, environmental, insurance, personal injury, tax equity, school funding, labor, community development, regulatory, and business issues, to name a few. Interns generally conduct research and do writing assignments relating to the area of law in which the government agency works. They also may attend hearings or trials, sit in on depositions or interviews, or go to meetings with their supervising attorneys. Students who are interested in specific agencies generally should contact the branch or main office in which they have an interest.

II. Paid positions

Assistant to Law Professor: Many professors hire research assistants to help them with legal research for conferences, legal publications or books that they are writing. RAs usually meet with the professor periodically and then conduct research. They then either hand over their raw research, or discuss it with the professor, or draft a memo of findings. This is a great opportunity to get to know a professor on a personal level, which may come in handy for recommendations in the future. Some of these positions continue into the academic year. Students can approach professors directly about opportunities or apply for advertised positions with a resume and letter. Most positions pay, but some may require work study funding.

Medium-sized & Small Law Firm: These make up the vast majority of all law firms, and many students and alumni work for small firms. It is difficult to obtain a position in a law firm as a 1L, but it may become easier later in the Spring after the 2Ls have obtained

their positions and have stopped applying. Many positions involve multiple practice areas, although some firms concentrate on specific practice areas. These jobs offer hands-on experience and an opportunity to develop strong lawyering skills. Law clerks will generally conduct legal research and writing assignments. They may discuss their research with attorneys, and may have an opportunity to attend hearings, client meetings or trials.

Large Law Firm: Large firms generally have a broad range of legal practice areas and but may not allow students to get much client contact and also require long hours. 1Ls typically conduct research and writing assignments for different departments. Large firms have very strict hiring criteria: grades and writing credentials are very important. A few look at additional criteria, including experience, diversity status (broadly defined), and additional qualifications. Watch for information about applying to the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group and the New Jersey Law Firm Group or contact Gwen Tolbert for information. 1Ls also may consider applying to these firms for a temporary paralegal position for the summer, in order to make contacts and get an inside perspective on firms for the following summer. Paralegal positions are paid, although not as much as 1L summer associate positions, but are easier to obtain.

In-House counsel at corporations, hospitals, non-profit organizations, and small businesses: Some have large legal departments (technology, banking, insurance) which may be departmentalized; others, even major corporations, have smaller (5 -20 attorneys) departments. 1L interns typically will conduct legal research and writing assignments, but also may attend company meetings or meet with outside counsel. Jobs are more limited and more difficult to obtain than positions at law firms.

Quick Employment Facts

- The majority of Rutgers Camden students and graduates work for small or mid-sized law firms, at government organizations and public interest agencies.
- Large Law firms represent approximately 15% of the legal market.
- Nationwide, only a small percentage of law school graduates work at large firms.
- Small or mid-sized law firms, government organizations and public interest agencies generally hire only a few months in advance of when they need someone to begin working (Late Fall Semester and Spring Semester for Summer Jobs)
- Most employers DO NOT advertise their available positions.
- The majority of successful candidates obtain employment through direct targeted mailings & networking.
- The majority of 1Ls who find summer legal employment work for government organizations or public interest agencies.