

## **The Evening Student's Job Search**

While all law students have quite a bit of work in store for them, students in the Evening Division have an even harder task ahead. In addition to handling your academic responsibilities, many of you have families and are also holding down a full-time job. To this mix, you will have to add one more important task, namely, planning for your career in the law.

Individuals make the decision to attend law school for a wide variety of reasons. Some are fully intent on practicing law in the traditional sense of representing clients by going to court, drafting legal documents and assisting them with business transactions, for example. Others, however, have no intention of practicing law in this traditional sense. Instead, their goal is to earn an additional degree which will allow them to work outside of their present career or simply to make themselves more marketable in their current professions.

Regardless of your career goals, you will need to acquire career building skills and utilize these skills throughout your career. In addition, it is important that you take action that will lead you in the direction you choose, including the choice of courses you take, the kind of work experience you obtain, joining a journal and taking part in extra-curricular activities.

### *1. Obtain Legal Experience Before Graduation*

Too many law students, both evening and day, assume that once they have obtained their law degree, doors will immediately fly open and welcome them with huge paychecks, because, after all, they are lawyers now! Given the current supply of lawyers, however, the legal world no longer works that way, assuming it ever did at all. While many of you have distinguished yourselves in your present or prior careers legal employers look for candidates who have practical legal experience when they consider who to hire for future full-time legal employment. You must, therefore, develop creative strategies that will enable you to obtain legal experience.

In the past, evening students have worked as legal interns at night, on weekends, or by devoting one full work day a week to a legal position. Some have taken a leave of absence during the summer months to obtain legal experience. Others have made a complete transition to a full-time legal position. While some of these ideas may appear onerous and extreme, the cost of not getting practical experience during your law school career is a price that few of you will be happy to pay – feeling "stuck" in your present career in spite of all the time and money that you have invested in attending law school.

## *2. Anticipate and Plan for a Change in Your Financial Situation*

Many students in the Evening Division often enjoy salaries in the middle to high five figure range, after having worked for several years in their present full-time professions. When becoming new members of the legal profession, such students often face a pay cut during their first few years of law practice. Consequently, it is important that you plan as early as possible during your law school careers for the possibility of a lower salary in your early postgraduate legal positions.

## *3. Common Evening Student Myths*

**MYTH:** I can wait until I graduate from law school before I start the job search process.  
**FACT:** Legal employers seek graduates who have acquired practical legal skills in "real life" settings, such as in internships and clerkships, before they graduate. As such, it is incumbent upon you to get this experience during law school. Moreover, certain legal employers (such as large law firms) actually make hiring decisions one to two years before a student graduates.

**MYTH:** I can wait until after graduation to engage in self-assessment and networking.  
**FACT:** Only by engaging in self-assessment early in your law school career will you be able to plan ahead to take the courses you wish and obtain the experience you need. Similarly, networking is a long-term process. The earlier you start, the larger and more effective your network of professional contacts will be. Many Evening students can utilize the people they know in their current profession to help them meet and develop relationships with attorneys practicing in their area of interest.

**MYTH:** I already have a resume so I do not need to have it reviewed by the Career Planning Office.  
**FACT:** Most Evening students have a quality business resume that is appropriate for their current profession. They do not, however, have a resume that is appropriate for the legal profession. Our office can assist you in revising your resume to highlight skills of interest to legal employers and make the format appropriate for the legal market.

**MYTH:** I have no legal experience, so no legal employer will be interested in hiring me.  
**FACT:** Even if you have no actual legal experience, chances are good that you have other experience that demonstrates skills that are transferable to a legal setting. Our counselors can help you to create a resume that highlights these transferable skills.

**MYTH:** I work full time! There is no way that I can do an internship, work full-time, and go to school at night! It just cannot be done! Besides, I have too much coursework, business and family commitments to worry about what I will do when I graduate. I don't need to think about looking for a legal job until after I graduate.  
**FACT:** There is no question that acquiring legal experience is difficult for Evening students. Nonetheless, because such experience is so important to your being able to

successfully obtain legal employment after graduation, it is necessary to find creative ways to obtain this necessary experience.

MYTH: Career Planning counselors are not available at times that are convenient for me.

FACT: Career Planning counselor will make appointments with you to accommodate your schedule. We are in available for in-person and phone appointments during the day and in the evening.

#### *4. Resumes*

Evening students often face special issues when developing resumes because of their extensive work experience before coming to law school. Our office can assist you in revising your resume to highlight skills of interest to legal employers and make the format appropriate for the legal market. To request a resume review, email your resume to [careerplanning@camlaw.rutgers.edu](mailto:careerplanning@camlaw.rutgers.edu)

#### *5. The Interview: Questions You Are Likely to Encounter*

The following is a list of questions you may typically face in an interview; make sure you have prepared thoughtful answers to these questions:

Is the law your 2nd, 3rd, 4th (or more) career?

How long did you work at your previous career?

Did you come to law school because you were at a dead end in your career?

Did you come to law school to change the focus of your work?

Did you come to law school because you were in a troubled industry?

Did you come to law school to “piggyback” on your last career (i.e. accountant, engineer, etc.)?

Why did you come to law school?

Do you expect to make more money, be given more responsibility, autonomy than in your previous position?

Will you have difficulty in taking direction from someone that is younger than you?

All of these questions create an opportunity for you to present your personal history and demonstrate that you are the ideal candidate. This is your opportunity to impress the employer with your maturity, judgment and eagerness to enter a new field.