

## **2008 Equal Justice Conference**

### ***Best Practices in Law Student Recruitment, Supervision, and Long-term Relationship Development***

#### **Presenters**

Steve Grumm (moderator)  
Director of Public Service Initiatives  
NALP  
[sgrumm@nalp.org](mailto:sgrumm@nalp.org)  
202-296-0057

Ann Juergens  
Professor and Co-Director of Clinics  
William Mitchell College of Law  
[ann.juergens@wmitchell.edu](mailto:ann.juergens@wmitchell.edu)  
(651)290-6391

Janine Laird  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Justice Foundation  
612-625-0777  
[janine@mnjustice.org](mailto:janine@mnjustice.org)

Sue Schechter  
Field Placement Coordinator  
University of California  
Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall)  
510-643-7387  
[sschechter@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:sschechter@law.berkeley.edu)

Jennifer Thomas  
Legal Recruiting Manager  
Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia  
[jenthomas@pdsdc.org](mailto:jenthomas@pdsdc.org)  
202.824-2337

#### **Program Description**

This program delivers concrete solutions for recruiting and managing law students. Well-trained, committed students are key assets for programs facing resource challenges and for those who wish to cultivate the next generation of staff attorneys and leaders. Join a panel of successful student supervisors, who work in both law school and employment settings, for a discussion of recruitment best practices, supervision models, and ways to ensure that today's students become tomorrow's staff attorneys, volunteers, and financial contributors. We encourage you to bring your best ideas with you to share during this interactive program.

#### **Program Outline**

- I) Welcome & Introductions
  - A) Panelist Intros
  - B) Overview of Program Format and Objectives
  - C) Overview of Handouts
  
- II) Law Student Recruitment
  - A) Law Student Resume Review and Interview - Role Play
  - B) Review – What Have We Learned?
  - C) Best Practices in Recruiting Law Students

- 1) Conceptualize your summer, fall, or spring program - Think about how many students, what types of legal work, and generally about what kind of program you want to offer to law students seeking work with your organization.
- 2) Draft a Job Description – Make it specific, real, and meaningful. There is no reason to hide the ball on salary – you do not want to waste your time on the students’ time. If the position is unpaid, state it clearly. (You can provide some information about funding sources: PSLawNet Summer Funding page - <http://www.pslawnet.org/content/index.php?pid=50>; whether you are a Federal Work Study participant; and funding opportunities through the student’s law school). Finally, be honest about job responsibilities. Job descriptions should be accurate, not aspirational.
- 3) Publicize Widely
  - PSLawNet – [www.pslawnet.org](http://www.pslawnet.org). – is a FREE online public interest job bank with nearly 200 subscribing law schools.
  - Law School Career Services Offices (or Public Interest Offices)
  - Other appropriate web sites.
- 4) Take advantage of career fairs and other networking opportunities – Go beyond the law school staff or faculty you know and participate in local, regional, or national career fairs. Participate also in public interest networking events which law students will attend, such as school or bar association gatherings. Take advantage of On Campus Interviewing (OCI) programs if their timelines mesh with yours.
- 5) Spend time on your promotional materials, including website content – the key words are: Informative, Accurate, Current, and Attractive.
- 6) Select the right recruiters from your organization, and train them – Make sure the people who are representing your organization are dynamic speakers who can put the organization’s best foot forward. Ensure that they can speak broadly about all aspects of your organization (not just their practice area). And make certain that they are clear about EEOC and other common sense guidelines – what they can/can not ask, etc.
- 7) Set up a formal system to receive and respond to inquiries, receive applications, and to decide whom to interview. Regardless of your organization’s size, an efficient application processing system is a lifesaver in the long run. Acknowledge all applications regardless of whether or not they will lead to interviews.
- 8) Resume Review – Do not waste time on applicants with major mistakes in their resumes or obvious, significant red flags. Do not discount applicants because of a minor typo, but trust your instincts when you see a problem.
- 9) Interview Tips:
  - Review the candidate’s materials thoroughly before the interview. It sounds obvious, but be honest – how many times have you skimmed a resume 2 minutes before the interview?
  - Make sure you (or your interviewers) are trained in behavioral and other interviewing techniques. Use open-ended questions and hypotheticals to learn about the applicants’ thought processes. Remember, applicants can

- memorize and regurgitate information. By having them think on their feet, though, you will learn more about them.
    - Regardless of your interviewing techniques, ensure that all students have a similar interviewing experience.
    - Be careful about good cop/bad cop interviewing – the strange personality dynamics tend to confuse students, and they can not focus on the substance of the interview.
    - Trust your instincts.
- 10) Rejection Letters – while you must make clear at the beginning of the letter that the student is not getting the job, you may add language about the possibility of future opportunities with the organization, and/or wish them luck in pursuing other public interest opportunities. Example: “We had a large pool of candidates, and did hire another one. But this is not a negative reflection on your strong credentials or your commitment to public interest work, and we wish you the best of luck in finding the right fit in the local public interest community.”
- 11) The students are interviewing you, too! There are two important things to remember:
  - Students talk to other students, so you must handle their interviews fairly and equally. If students compare notes and paint radically different pictures of their respective experiences, it looks bad for the organization.
  - Regardless of whether a particular student pans out for a particular job opening, they form an impression of the organization that they will carry forward. You never know where your future staff attorneys, donors, and bar leaders will come from...

### III) Law Student Supervision

- A) Law Student Supervision - Role Play
- B) Review – What Have We Learned?
- C) Best Practices in Supervising Law Students
  1. Create a Work Plan.
    - Get started quickly—don’t plan too much warm up time.
    - Be creative, clear and honest in your description of assignments.
    - Assign a variety of tasks, if available.
    - Allow the student to watch you in your work as a lawyer. Bring them along.
    - Give the student credit on written work submitted to the court.
  2. Make Your Expectations Clear with Respect to:
    - Ethical boundaries.
    - Quality of work expected.
    - Professional self presentation.
    - Frequency of communication.
    - Timelines.
    - Treatment of staff.

(Your first impression will set a tone for the rest of the placement—be intentional about it).
  3. Learn the Student’s Goals and Expectations.
  4. Teach Ethical Norms.
    - Limits of the student's role.
    - Confidentiality

- Conflicts of interest
5. Agree on Communication Methods - Email/phone/in person/text message/social networking sites.
  6. Give Feedback and Evaluation.
    - Include what was done well alongside what to improve.
    - Again, honesty is better than false praise, but be constructive with all critique.
  7. Ask for Evaluations from the School or Organization that is Sending you Students.
  8. Don't Delay in Dealing with Difficult Students – if appropriate, call the pro bono office or law school for help.

#### IV) Long-term Relationship Development with Law Students

##### A) Why Is It Important?

1. We all have a responsibility to cultivate the next generation of public interest leaders.
2. It is critical for students to see what practice and resource allocation are really like.
3. Plant seeds for private sector partnerships (including pro bono and other projects).
4. "Make nice" for cultivating future donor relationships.
5. Current students may be future employees or future references for students and graduates considering your organization.

##### B) Best Practices in Building Long-term Relationships with Law Students

- 1) Give students a "full" experience – include them in social events, staff meetings, etc. They will invest in you when you invest in them.
- 2) Be explicit about the importance you place on developing long-term relationships with your student workers. Solicit input from them about how to do that.
- 3) Add new students (interns, volunteers, externs...everybody) to organization mailing lists and your contacts database. Make sure the database allows you to properly categorize them and record their roles.
- 4) Invite former students to fundraisers, community outreach/education programs, celebrations, and other events. Even those who do not attend will remember being invited.
- 5) Ask former students to return to teach current students about maximizing their time with your organization.
- 6) Explore creation of student fellowship funded by a law school alumni association (e.g. Notre Dame's Alumni-Funded Fellowship Program);
- 7) Build relationships with law school faculty who are public interest-minded, who specialize in your substantive practice areas, and who administer experiential learning (e.g. clinical) programs.
- 8) Build relationships with law school administrative staff (e.g. public interest career advisors, alumni managers, media relations managers, etc.)
- 9) Think of your former students when you have special projects, need board members, etc.

#### V) Resources

- A) NALP "Nurturing the Next Generation" Tip Sheet
- B) PSLawNet Flier
- C) East Bay Community Law Center law student supervision materials