

GUIDELINES FOR SURVEYING YOUR GRADUATES AND COMPILING YOUR DATA...TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES



GENERAL GUIDELINES

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR GRADUATES TO RESPOND

Regardless of how you collect information, whether via a survey or grads/students input their information directly, please provide them with the “NALP Graduate Employment Survey for the Class of 2012 FAQ.” This Frequently Asked Questions document will help them to correctly provide the information requested. An explanatory cover memo or email is also suggested. This memo should stress the confidentiality of information provided, noting that identifying information requested is necessary to enable you to follow up with non-respondents and to follow up with questions as necessary, but that no names or identifying information will be submitted to NALP. You may also wish to provide the “Graduates We Need Your Help” sheet to encourage response from your graduates.

START EARLY AND KEEP ASKING QUESTIONS UNTIL YOU GET ANSWERS

Only a fraction of your graduates, maybe even less than a third, are likely to respond to your initial survey or to your request to complete information online. It will therefore be necessary to do a second, and perhaps a third reminder or mailing to non-respondents. Ultimately, however, expect to call your most elusive graduates to obtain information. Put another way, only your concerted effort and persistence will garner complete and accurate information on your graduates. This information, however, will serve you well with many audiences. You have until March 18, 2013 to track down those elusive graduates (though of course you are measuring their status as of February 15). Note that you may also obtain information from second-hand sources: you may hear about a graduate through classmates, friends, family members, or faculty. You can also make use of online resources, such as a list of bar admittees in your state, and Google. Take advantage of this information as necessary, taking care, however, to take reasonable steps to confirm that the information is accurate and that the information you are reporting is fact-based. Graduates are particularly reluctant to provide salary information, but often such information is a matter of public record, information that can be used, even if not did come directly from the graduate. For example, starting salaries at large firms are known, as are salaries for many judicial clerks.

If you are not already doing so, a survey or data collection effort before graduation is highly recommended, to get as much information as possible before your grads leave campus. NALP posts the graduate survey form for the upcoming class (in this case the Class of 2013) early in the same calendar year for your use.

For additional tips on surveying your graduates, take a look at the handout from the “CSO Cold Case Files” program presented at the 2007 NALP Annual Education Conference. The handout is posted on NALP's website. Click on Conferences & Events > Conference Handouts > 2007 Handouts, then scroll down to the title. You will need your NALP login and password to access the document.

Be sure also to refer to NALP’s “Best Practices Guide for Managing Law School Employment Outcomes,” which is posted at http://www.nalp.org/lseotf_bestpract. It details what it means to collect and report reliable graduate employment information.

BUT REMEMBER THAT ANSWERS CAN CHANGE

If you collected information at graduation, you should follow up with graduates known to have a job at that time and confirm that the information collected then still holds, and request updated information if it has changed. You should also follow up with graduates who were not working at that time, with those known to have had a short-term commitment at that time and of course with those for whom you did not have any information. Remember that you will be reporting status as of February 15, 2013, and that for some graduates, this will have changed, for better or for worse, since graduation. **WHEN YOU RECEIVE UPDATED INFORMATION ON A GRADUATE, BE SURE TO CHANGE ALL THE JOB INFORMATION.** For example, perhaps the graduate is no longer searching for a job other than that being reported, the job may have been obtained after bar results, or a description of an earlier job may no longer be accurate.

LOOK AT WHAT YOUR GRADUATES ARE TELLING YOU

Upon receiving information, either via survey or online, you or a staff member familiar with the ERSS process should review that information for accuracy and validity before it becomes “final” in whatever format. In particular, graduates may not classify themselves correctly as to overall status and/or employer type. Adjustments may be necessary to conform with ERSS definitions. You should also check the name of the employer against the employer classification indicated by the graduates and adjust if necessary. Or, information may conflict. For example, if a graduate reports a government employer and a law office size and type, you will need to determine which employer type is correct. Salaries that seem unusual based on your knowledge of the legal mar-

ket also warrant a follow-up. If you received updated information as the result of a follow-up mailing, telephone call, or other means, please be sure that all of the information submitted to NALP for each graduate reflects the latest input.

Note that if your students enter their own information, for example, into Symplicity or into an online data collection system that you designed, it remains very important to carefully check what they have done for accuracy, completeness, and conformity to ERSS definitions.

SURVEY NOTES

Included in this package is a “photocopy master” survey which you may copy to survey your graduates. This form is designed to encourage accurate and complete responses from graduates. As always, you may of course modify the master survey to add your own questions and/or develop your own survey form. To receive an electronic version of the survey as a word-processing document, contact the NALP office; a PDF version is posted on NALP’s website under Professional Resources > Career Services > Employment Report and Salary Survey Information.

As noted above, your survey must include the graduate’s name or some means of identifying and matching the survey with a specific individual so that you can monitor responses and follow up with graduates who have not responded.

IF YOU SUBMIT HARD-COPY SURVEY FORMS OR AN ‘ASCII’ FILE

If you submit your information to NALP using hard copy forms, DO NOT use the numbered forms directly with your graduates. They are NOT designed to be filled out by graduates. You should transfer the information received from graduates onto the numbered forms.

TRANSLATE WORDS TO CODES

You will need to “translate” the city and state job location information provided by your graduates into the corresponding 5-digit city codes provided by NALP. These codes are listed in the back of the Instruction Booklet. If you know just the state location of the job, but not the specific city, use the “Other/unknown” code for that state (e.g., a job in an other or unknown town in Connecticut would be coded as 10799).

ENSURE THE FORMS ARE LEGIBLE AND CAN BE CORRELATED WITH INDIVIDUALS

Forms should be filled out neatly, with just one item checked per question. Be sure that only one kind of employer is indicated, and that your law school name is written or stamped in the space provided on the forms returned to NALP. You may wish to place an identifier in the upper right-hand corner of the forms to assist you in transferring information from your surveys to the forms submitted to NALP. Alternatively, you may use the preprinted number on the back of the form as your means of correlating the survey forms with graduates. Make a copy of your forms (both sides) before sending them to NALP.

AND FINALLY.....

PROOFREAD, COUNT, AND DOUBLE-CHECK

Once information has been entered into a computer, completed online or transferred to hard copy forms, please check your forms for completeness and accuracy. Make use of any check and verification features available in your software. Also review the enclosed “Before You Hit Send” document. If you are using Symplicity, please check that city names are spelled exactly as shown in the Instruction Booklet. Symplicity looks for an exact match to convert a city name to the NALP code. For example, if the job location is entered as “Philly,” the file for NALP will not have the city code for Philadelphia.

QUESTIONS?
CALL THE NALP OFFICE IF YOU NEED HELP!
202-835-1001