

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL ON RECOMMENDER DIRECTORY
NALP OSCAR WORKING GROUP
May 20, 2009

Dear Colleagues:

We're writing to follow up on the email from OSCAR concerning the master directory of recommenders uploaded by law schools. In April, 2009, inactive recommender accounts – those with no activity since September 30, 2008 – were archived. Once archived, those recommenders are no longer listed in the law school recommender directory dropdown, their usernames and passwords do not work, and their completed letters are removed. The launch of OSCAR 5.0 on May 18 means that you can now repopulate your recommender directory in the new system. It is important to update your recommender directory as promptly as possible, preferably before the Class of 2010 is granted access on Friday, May 22..

One Reminder: Clean up your Law School Administrator (LSA) Accounts

Remember that OSCAR recognizes one person from each law school as the primary LSA, who can create other administrator accounts within the school and designate varying levels of administrative rights. If staff turnover or reorganization at your school means that different people will be working with OSCAR this season, now is the time to update your administrator accounts. Only the OSCAR staff can change your primary LSA, and the staff will only make that change upon a written request from the dean/director of your career services office (which can be emailed to the OSCAR help desk: oscar-support@ao.uscourts.gov). Because we know that the person who was the primary LSA was often also designated as the "universal CC" for all recommendation request emails, we also encourage you to update the "universal CC" at the same time you make other changes. That can also be done via an email request to the OSCAR help desk.

Be Prepared to Upload Your Faculty Recommenders Before Your Students Input Them

After archiving, your recommender directories may have significant gaps. Students, or especially alumni, who will want to create applications now will type in their recommenders themselves if they don't find them on the dropdown list, which could create confusing duplications.

a. Who's on your Master List?

There are some clear choices for your recommender directory: your permanent faculty. We suggest including everyone on your permanent faculty, even those who might be visiting at another school in the coming academic year. That is the best way to ensure that your applicants have access to them as soon as they need them.

Other people more tangentially associated with your law school fall into a gray area (e.g., adjuncts, lecturers, visiting faculty for the coming academic year or for prior years). Not only are they not permanently affiliated with your school, they may well have affiliations with multiple schools. In addition to assessing your own institution's needs and the recommenders' preferences, you should understand how OSCAR treats recommenders with multiple school affiliations before deciding whether to include these categories of people in your recommender directory.

b. What will happen with recommenders associated with multiple schools?

For OSCAR, the recommender's email address – not the name – is key to identifying duplicate entries. When an LSA (or applicant) from "XYZ School of Law" attempts to create a new recommender account, OSCAR will first check to see if that recommender email address already exists, either in XYZ's directory or in any other law school's directory. If it already exists in XYZ's directory, OSCAR will not create a new account, but will simply "merge" the new upload with the existing account. If another recommender account with that same email address already exists at another school, rather than creating a second duplicate account, OSCAR will instead "associate" XYZ with the already existing account. That means

both LSAs, the one from the first school and the one from XYZ, will have access to that recommender's account and can edit the recommender's profile; moreover, both schools will be able to view ALL recommendation requests made of that recommender from all schools. This "association" will also occur if an applicant uses the "create recommender" feature; OSCAR will recognize the email address and add the applicant to the pending recommendation list, but will not change any other information.

Because OSCAR makes distinctions based on email addresses, the use of different email addresses will create duplicate accounts for the same person. For example, if XYZ uploads Jane T. Adjunct with "jtadjunct@gmail.com" and an applicant from another school adds her with "jane.adjunct@biglawfirm.com," OSCAR will create a separate account for her at each school. In that case, neither LSA will be able to view recommendation requests by applicants from the other school.

When you encounter a recommender account that includes recommendation requests from students from another school, we urge you to contact your counterpart at the other school to insure all requests are processed (and to avoid duplication of efforts). Also, if you know in advance that any of your faculty or affiliates are likely to be associated with another school, we suggest that you reach out to the other school to collaborate on developing a joint plan for processing his or her recommendation requests.

c. Not many recommenders archived?

Since alumni and graduating students can—and do—utilize OSCAR virtually year-round, you may find that many of your faculty are not archived and remain on the Recommender list. If you do not have many changes to make, you may prefer to update individual recommender accounts from the Recommender list. You can make changes to an existing account (e.g., a different phone number or faculty assistant email address) by choosing Recommenders from the left sidebar menu, then finding the individual recommender. Clicking on the Edit icon (paper and pencil) next to the recommender's name will take you to the Recommender Details edit page, where you can type in your changes, then click on Save & Exit. You can also add a single recommender by scrolling to the bottom of the Recommender list page and clicking on "Add New." (If you prefer to use spreadsheets in all events, read the next section.)

d. Phased uploading – or, you don't have to be perfect the first time!

We realize that information on your faculty list is bound to change over the course of the summer. Although you can certainly make individual changes on a piecemeal basis, OSCAR 5.0 also will allow you to upload periodically a revised spreadsheet of your entire faculty, their email addresses, and their faculty assistants – without creating duplicate accounts for faculty whose information was already uploaded and did not change. OSCAR will, however, update an existing recommender account that contains information different from the information previously uploaded. OSCAR will also create a new recommender account for each new faculty member who was not included in a prior uploaded list.

Also, because OSCAR will recognize duplicate entries, you need not remove "unarchived" faculty (those with current pending requests) from your master list prior to your upload. They will retain their existing password and have access to their templates and completed recommendations.

Thanks for your attention,
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