

I Can't Find a Job: Advising Recent Graduates

Annual NALP Conference, San Francisco, CA, April 2017

Questions for Recent Graduates: A Sample First Meeting Approach

1. Understand why the graduate is here (*How can I help you today?*)
2. Meet the graduate's needs (*Do you have any specific questions for me?*)
3. Determine the scope of the job search (*What type of job are you looking for?*)
If they don't know, use self-assessment tools and ask additional questions:
What work have you liked in the past? Which classes did you enjoy?
What skills do you have?
Do you like research, writing, oral argument, working with people, business, etc?
4. Discuss the geography of a job search (*Where are you interested in working?*)
If they don't know, pose additional questions:
Where would you like to live?
Where do you have family or connections?
Where does your resume show a connection?
Which bar exam did you take, and where could you practice with that bar?
5. Explore connections, and have them make networking lists or maps if needed:
What connections do you have in either the location or with that type of employer? Have you talked to those individuals?
Have you talked with your prior employers about suggestions or possible contacts?
6. Determine the actions the graduate has undertaken so far.
What have you done to look for work? What have you done to look for work?
Are you applying/networking/both? What/how many jobs have you applied to?
Where are you finding job postings? How many interviews have you had?
The job search should be a **three-pronged attack**. Make sure they are doing all three:
Applying to posted positions
Checking job boards and applying for actual posted positions, including the law school's job board, state bar job sites, PSJD, external job sites (e.g. Indeed)
Networking
Beyond step 5, above, show them how to find others (alumni directory, LinkedIn)
Discuss the appropriate approach - do not hit up for jobs directly: ask for information, other people they should talk to, etc.
Research possible employers for direct contact
Martindale, USAJOBS, State Bar, Professional Associations
7. Make sure you have met their needs
Do you have any more questions or things I could help you with today?
8. Establish another meeting, as needed.
Would you like to schedule a follow up with me in a few weeks to see how you are doing?
9. Give them specific, "baby-step" assignments, such as "update and send me your resume" or "prepare a draft cover letter to a specific employer."

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Toolkit for Advising Recent Graduates

Career Services Office Tools

- Bridge to Practice programs
- Mentoring programs
- Alumni database
- Mental health resources, to identify when those issues are present or refer to appropriate providers

Counseling Tools

- Initial assessment of written materials, work experience, interview skills, and soft skills
- Discussion of realistic timelines and expectations
- Powerful & coaching questions; sample script for approaching a first meeting (see additional handout)
- Exploring JD-Advantage opportunities or other ways to expand the search
- Scheduled, regular follow-up or contact

Tools for Alumni to Use (with Counseling Guidance)

- Focusing the job search (through assessments and informational interviews)
- Joining bar associations and sections (using these leads for long distance job searches)
- Networking
- Targeted cold outreach



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Case Studies for Group Discussion

Case Study #1 (A)

Mark graduated in May and comes into your office in August. He just took the bar exam and he is having trouble finding a permanent job. Mark is interested in practicing environmental law, and has been ever since coming into law school. He interned with the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Sierra Club, and the Natural Resources Defense Council while in law school and graduated in the middle of his class. He did not come to the Career Services Office after his first year because he had no problem obtaining internships and he already knew the career track he wanted to pursue. Now he is feeling lost. He was hoping to obtain an honors fellowship with the EPA but after making it to the final round he was not selected. All of the other places he worked in law school are not hiring entry-level attorneys and he is not sure where else to look. He has no interest in working at a law firm where he would have to represent “the polluters” – he would like to work in government or for a non-profit.

- What advice do you have for Mark about how to proceed?
- How might you convince him to branch out to other types of employers/practice areas to gain the experience he needs?

Case Study #1(B)

Mark gives you a call three months later. He had momentum after your last meeting but after a few weeks with very few responses he gave up. He tells you he has not left his apartment in a few weeks and stays in bed for most of the day. As he continues to talk he starts crying.

- What is your response now?

Case Study #2 (A)

Jenny graduated in May and comes to your office in September. She worked throughout law school as a paralegal, and although her employer is willing to keep her on in that role, the firm will not hire her as an attorney. Jenny's grades put her just below the median in the class and she had no extracurricular activities because of her work. This work has been largely administrative, but she needs the income that it provides, so she is not willing to volunteer elsewhere to gain the experience you think she needs for most of the law firm positions that interest her.

- What do you advise her to do?
- What are other ways she could gain experience?
- Are there “coaching” questions you could ask her to help her make some tough decisions?

Case Study #2 (B)

Jenny comes back in early November to report that she did not pass the bar, due to a heavy work schedule in July.

- How does your advice change?
- What should she do next?

Case Study #3

David is a very nice, very smart, accomplished student. He is in the top 10% of his class, is an excellent researcher, and has focused much of his summer experience in research positions for professors. David decides, during his 3L year, that he would like to practice family law, even though he has no experience in family law. David would fit right in with the gentlemen on *The Big Bang Theory*: he loves “fan fiction” and *Lord of the Rings*, is not the most fashionable dresser, and in fact, still lives with his parents. He has difficulty in interviews. Although extremely likeable, David lacks the professional polish that most employers look for.

- How do you help David reach his dreams?
- How can you help him overcome his social skill problems and do better in interviews?

