



WAKE FOREST
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SCHOOL of LAW

*In Their Own Words:
Insight and Advice from Recent Wake Law
Graduates on the Postgraduate Job Search Process*

Preface

Hard things are hard, and managing the postgraduate job search process is one of the hardest and most stressful challenges that some of you will face as you prepare for your new life as a lawyer. For that reason, instead of starting off with advice and suggestions from the career advisors in our office, we thought it more immediately helpful to you to be able to read a few of the short stories and bits of advice from other recent Wake Forest Law graduates, all but one of whom, were in your shoes a year ago.

By design, the authors of the short submissions selected below are all Wake Law graduates who had not yet received an offer of employment prior to graduation (which, by the way, is the position of typically half of each year's graduating class). The good news is that through persistence and effort each one these Wake Law graduates ended up landing on their feet and in jobs, that have at times, even exceeded their expectations. As daunting as some of the graduates' suggestions may seem (e.g., more networking, attending bar events. . . ugh!), please keep in mind that you are building skills that will be integral to your continued professional development and a major part of your ultimate success as a lawyer.

At the end of the stories, we have included a list of a few resources, along with some tips from the career advisors in our office. We hope that you will consider these suggestions and tips as you think about some of the specific, concrete steps that you can begin and continue to incorporate in your own job search efforts. Even more importantly, we hope that you will actively seek out and regularly communicate with your career advisor and avoid trying to go it alone. Particularly, as you gear up for bar study, and prepare to shift your focus temporarily after graduation to bar exam preparation, we suggest that you speak with and invite your career advisor to serve as your eyes and ears for job leads that might come in that match with your career interests.

Graduate Stories: In Their Words

Each of the submissions that appear below have not been edited or revised. The submissions are in the very own words of our graduates. However, we have chosen to include the geographic location and delete the name of each of the authors in an effort to manage and balance the amount of contact you may wish to initiate with any one of them. Each one of the graduates has indicated a willingness to connect or be available to help advise you in your own unique journey. If you would like the specific name or contact information for any of the authors whose submissions appear below, please contact your career advisor and the person's name and email address will be made available to you.

Class of 2016 Graduate (New York)

I apologize for the late reply. I am trying to get acclimated to working full time again.

But for your 3L's: I would just tell them to continue to be persistent, even when it looks like times are dark. The earlier they know what market they want to be in, the better. As you know, I personally got a late start on applying for jobs here in NYC because I was back and forth about where I wanted to practice. Once I was fully committed to moving back though, I was extremely active emailing people, mostly blindly. Every time I visited up here, I had a lunch or coffee

informational interview with someone.

Also, I would also encourage them to not get discouraged when they receive multiple "no's". It truly only takes one yes, and it will eventually come if you continue to be active in your search. Once you get that "yes," you'll truly forget about every single rejection you've received.

Finally, remind them to be open in their search. This firm I work for now, I initially overlooked them. I did not think I would have any interest in the practice area, and actually convinced myself that since they were a small firm, they could not have been hiring around this time. So don't overlook any firm or any potential connection you can make.

Class of 2016 Graduate (Kentucky)

My best advice is to take each day one at a time. The worst thing to do is ruin the entirety of 3L year because every moment was consumed with worrying about the job search! I found myself getting overwhelmed when I would think about where I should even look for jobs, then having to do the cover letters, and if all those didn't work out, having to do the process all over again. But when I planned my schedule to take each day one at a time, that really helped me stay calm. I actually got the advice from you--plan an hour or 2 a few days out of the week and that time is dedicated to job search/job document preparation. That way, you are moving along with job things, but at the same time staying calm and also staying on top of schoolwork without constantly worrying about finding a job. I found that on the days when I blocked out an entire half of a Saturday to do the job search, I would end up tired, frustrated, and less productive.

Also, I struggled a lot with falling into the trap of comparing myself to my friends. It is so easy in law school to compare yourself to others in grades, jobs, clinic placements, you name it. A lot of my friends and my boyfriend all had job offers by the end of the summer because they had worked at firms. I had a terrible habit of comparing myself to them, thinking that they had jobs because they were all on law review and had better grades and I was never going to get anywhere. But at the end of the day, comparing myself was so silly. 1) I wasn't going into the transactional world, and hadn't worked at a firm, so why did I really care so much? 2) With public interest, grades and law review aren't nearly as important and my resume was actually super strong for working in public interest. The key for me was to just stay on MY path, sticking to my scheduled plan, and really really working on patience.

The reason I was able to not lose it completely at times was because I would visit you. You recommended a schedule, and stayed positive yet realistic with me. Talking things out with you, helped me to climb out of the whole of frustration that I would sometimes find myself in. My next piece of advice would be to visit you even if there are no huge groundbreaking steps in the job search to share. Just chatting can make a big difference and help to see what direction to go next and what steps to take.

As a final note, please feel free to share my email address with any students that seem to be having trouble. You always had great advice, but talking to a student who recently went through all that the students are currently going through may help to calm their nerves as well. I'd be happy to talk via email or set up a time to talk on the phone!

Class of 2016 Graduate (North Carolina)

I love giving advice! Feel free to use my name or anything else about me to help those feeling lost in the job-search process:

The best advice for finding a job after law school: do not go it alone. I didn't find a job based on a resume I sent to an employer I found on a job search site. I found a job because people who knew me reached out to their friends in the legal world and handed my resume to employers actively searching for an entry-level associate. The job I accepted came from a former student emailing a Wake Law professor asking for recommendations. That professor gave the former student my resume, and a month later I'm packing up my apartment and moving across the state to start my legal career. You are not alone in your job search, and you should never keep your concerns on finding a job to yourself. Reach out to professors who teach in fields you want to work in. Become friends with your career counselor because it is literally their job to help you kickstart your job search. Contact the folks you interned with and ask them to give your resume to firms they know. Everyone at Wake wants you to find a job, and they are your best resource in your job search. Use them.

Class of 2016 Graduate (North Carolina)

As far as advice ... hmm, for me it was really trying not to get discouraged. I struggle with anxiety, so surrounding myself with a good support system - friends, my significant other - was really important just in terms of not feeling discouraged. Also, because of my anxiety, it was important for me to occasionally take a week or so where I was not actively looking for a job, just to manage my stress and decompress and not think about finding a job. I also think talking to students in your same position is helpful - just feeling like you aren't "alone" out there.

For interviews that I went on where I didn't get a job offer, I would think about what I could have done differently, but also tried not to dwell on it. Tell myself that just because I didn't get an offer this time doesn't mean that I am not qualified. (sounds cheesy but thinking positive really helps).

I think it's also helpful to talk to someone who recently got a job similar to what you may soon be interviewing for, and ask them what kinds of questions they were asked in their interview. For me, being able to "practice" some answers beforehand to hypothetical questions that may arise in an interview really calmed my nerves.

Let me know if you need anything else!

Class of 2016 Graduate (Texas)

1. Trust

Trust that someone is going to appreciate you and your style. For example, I don't think my firm hired me collectively. The position I originally applied for was specific to the needs of a couple shareholders. I did not get hired for that position. But while interviewing for that position I happened to impress a shareholder in a different "practice group." That shareholder liked my passion and hunger, while it obviously didn't impress the others (the associate they selected couldn't

be more different from me). So don't pretend to be somebody else. I am well aware that my personality--loud and a bit too confident--is off-putting to some, but it wasn't to the shareholder who hired me. The legal world is full of a variety of personalities. Someone will like yours.

2. Ignore

Ignore the lies. There are people who will fill your head with nonsense regarding the dire state of the legal market. They're bitter and suffering from something personal to them. A law degree from a tier one law school will not be overlooked. Please don't let other people's outwardly projected self-pity affect you. You don't need that negativity in your head while you're in an interview. I was not on Law Review. I was not on Moot Court. (I had a lot of success on the National Trial Team, but every time I used that to promote myself, someone would tell me that cases don't go to trial anymore.) I graduated at dead 50%. But yet I got my dream job within six weeks of taking the bar.

3. Footwork

Footwork. Gotta do it. You have to rub palms and remember names. It sucks. It feels fake and horrible, but there's not really any way around it. When I got back to Texas I was exhausted from graduating, packing, and traveling. But my mother-in-law's friend was going to a San Antonio Bar Association meeting, and he invited me along. I didn't even have a suit. All my stuff was in a moving truck traveling west somewhere in Dixie. So my wife bought me a suit moments before the mall closed, and I sucked it up and went to the luncheon. The food was average, the lecture was whatever, and there was a lot of awkward standing around and not knowing what to say to people. I sat next to an older gentleman who was a name partner in a civil defense firm. I didn't know what to say or do. My mother-in-law's friend kept embarrassingly mentioning how I had just graduated and was looking for work. At the end of the luncheon that older gentleman asked if I had a resume. Today he's my boss and mentor. Glad I went that day.

4. Breathe

You can consolidate your loans and get on a pay as you earn plan so relax. Student loans won't be due the day you graduate. Panic will affect your productivity and paralyze you. Worse, desperation drips off you and grosses everyone out. Be cool. Remember to trust. It's gonna be fine. Someone is going to want you.

5. Meditate

Just do it. Everyday. It'll change your life.

I hope this helps! You should probably add that asking for help is essential. Your guidance was crucial. Thank you!

Class of 2015 Graduate, after serving for approximately one year after graduation in a JD Advantage Compliance Position (Georgia)

- Be open to opportunities that aren't necessarily your ideal or targeted job, but are still related to what you're interested in. I got my compliance job as a result of applying to an actual legal position at that same place that I did not have enough experience for. They contacted me while I was studying for the bar and scheduled my interview for after the bar. At first I was hesitant because

I knew this wasn't the type of work I wanted to do. But it was related to the area of law I was interested in and it was a decent paying job. Although I knew relatively quickly that I did not want to continue in compliance, I gained experience that I never expected would be of interest to a legal employer (in the area of law I wanted) willing to hire an entry level attorney. Also the hours were somewhat decent, so I had some time to network and search for legal positions.

- Don't apply to anything and everything, because it's often a waste of time. If you land an interview for a position in an area you're not even really interested in, it will show in the interview. I only applied to jobs that were areas of law I had a strong, demonstrated interest or experience in. My passion for my area was easy to convey, easy to see, and easy to believe.
- I catered my search to my geographic area of interest. I used Martindale to identify firms in my targeted geographic area that practiced in the areas of law I was interested in, and then emailed them with a resume and a cover letter. I also made sure to include a brief introduction of who I was and why I was interested in working for that particular firm. Since I was not applying to anything and everything, this enabled me to create custom cover letters to prospective employers. The good thing is, if you're applying to many employers in the same area of law, there is not too much left that you would have to change for different applications anyway.
- Also, while I was not applying to anything and everything, I applied to opportunities in the area of law I was interested in that I did NOT think I would get contacted for. Never think that you aren't good enough. Just go for it and you'll be surprised at what you'll land.
- It helps if you've already passed the bar in the state of the geographical area you're interested in. If you don't have ties to the area, being licensed in the state not only shows that you are capable of doing the job, but that you are committed to practicing in the city of the state in which you are licensed.

Class of 2016 Graduate (North Carolina)

The general rule is that if a law student is unable to land a summer associate position, they have no chance of practicing at a larger firm after graduation. However, as every law student knows there is always an exception. Networking is that exception, and it's a pure numbers game. 99% of the attorneys you meet will provide generic advice and will not be the connection you need to land your desired job. It is a grueling and discouraging process, but it absolutely works. I met with approximately 100 attorneys at most of the larger firms before I found the one connection I needed to land an interview. This is where the most important benefit of networking kicked in. I had an enormous advantage over the other interviewees because I had already met many of the partners and associates through networking. Not only did networking land me a position at a great firm, it also helped me establish many connections throughout the legal community which will be a tremendous asset as I begin my legal career.

Postgraduate Resources To Keep in Mind

- ***Symplicity and Wake Law online resources*** -- You will continue to have ongoing access to Symplicity job postings, the OCPD Resource Center and WIN/alumni directory. To maintain this access you will need to update the e-mail address associated with your account before your

wfu.edu email address expires. We have a range of tools in our online resource center filled with a range of job search resources, links, publications, and more to help you as you continue down your career path. You can access this information by signing into Symplicity and clicking the link for Resources on your home page announcement.

- ***Launching Legal Practice Fellowship*** -- Wake Forest Law offers graduates who obtain a short-term unpaid position with a government or public interest employer a stipend through the Launching Legal Practice Fellowship. The LLPF allows recent graduates to work full-time in a 10-week unpaid position following the bar exam for a stipend of \$3000. Grants are limited and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Graduates must submit the Intent to Apply form by Tuesday, May 16, 2017, to Francie Scott via email at scottfs@wfu.edu and complete and submit Part 2 of the fellowship application by August 15, 2017. Additional information and application materials can be found on our website on the Resource Center page.
- ***Alumni job postings from other law schools*** -- Wake Forest is part of a consortium of law schools that participate in the BYU Intercollegiate Job Bank. Member schools provide job postings for recent graduates and alumni (updated on a monthly basis). This resource is particularly helpful to students who are seeking out-of-state employment, as you can view the alumni job bulletin of law schools in your area. The Job Bank can be accessed at https://www.law2.byu.edu/Career_Services/jobbank/. The user name is *jobfind* and the password is *lawlawland*. Note that the user name and password are changed often. OCPD lists the most updated information on the Resources page of the OCPD web site. You should take the time to review the bulletins of all law schools, not just those in the geographic area where you are seeking employment. Many schools have job postings from locations across the country.
- ***Reciprocity*** -- If you are seeking employment outside of North Carolina, some law school career offices offer reciprocity privileges. The policies for each school varies and some schools may offer access to job postings, while others limit privileges to direct counseling services. Even if a school does not provide access to job listings, it can be helpful to speak with a career advisor who is familiar with that particular local job market. These privileges are not guaranteed and the career offices at other schools reserve the right to limit or decline access to their services depending on the volume of requests they receive. Reciprocity requests must come from the Wake Forest Office of Career & Professional Development. Most law schools post their reciprocity policies on their website – be sure to review the policy before asking us to make the request. For additional information, contact Alvita Barrow (barrowae@wfu.edu).
- ***Career Counseling*** -- Your career advisor will continue to work with you on your job search, providing job leads, career advice, cover letter and resume reviews, mock interviews, etc. Stay in frequent contact with your career advisor (by phone or in person) after the bar exam and throughout your job search.
- ***Wake Forest Law Mentor Program*** – This program is an initiative that we began last year and expect to continue this year. The program is designed specifically to assign interested new Wake Law graduates who have not yet finalized their postgraduate employment plans with a mentor. The mentor will help introduce the graduate to a professional network of other lawyers in the graduate's area of interest, help the graduate find new ways to connect, and help the graduate maintain momentum during the job search process.

- **HireOne** – Through the HireOne initiative, Class of 2017 Wake Law graduates who are actively seeking employment will have the opportunity to post their resume and information regarding their bar exam location and geographic preference area on the site that is viewable only by Wake Forest Law alumni. Alumni who have employment opportunities potentially available through their firm, company, or organization can then reach out directly to the graduate regarding the graduate's interest in the particular opportunity.

Tips and Advice from the OCPD Career Advisors

Pre-graduation and prior to the start of bar exam preparation and study

- Meet with your career advisor at least once before graduation to discuss where you intend to take the bar and to discuss and identify some concrete steps for your continued job search efforts.
- Prior to graduation, and particularly if you are interested in public interest and government employment opportunities, discuss with your career advisor the benefits of applying for funding through the Launching Legal Practice Fellowship.
- Be sure and let your career advisor know if you are interested in having a Wake Law alumnus(a) assigned as a mentor.
- Continue to check Symplicity, psjd.org, usajobs.gov, and other online job listings such as those maintained by many state bar associations for potential job opportunities. Positions open up unpredictably and even though you might notice a decrease in the number of applicable listings, you should still have a habit of checking these sites weekly for listings of possible interest to you.
- Once you have graduated, update your resume, LinkedIn profile, and other profiles to reflect your graduation.

Post-graduation and through the administration of the bar exam

- Focus on studying and preparing for the bar exam. We strongly recommend that you do not work while studying for the bar exam or spend a lot of time on job searches. As our office becomes aware of any potential and specific job leads that match your area of interest and geographic location, we will contact you about that particular lead or when we learn of opportunities that may be of interest to you.
- In preparation for the end of your WFU email account access, be sure to change and update your email address on your documents and in all of your profile information on any of the job sites where you might have created a profile.
- Your Wake Forest e-mail address will no longer be active as of mid-July. Be sure to set up an alternative email address and, if you have not yet done so, update potential employers of your contact information, and also update any sites where you might have previously listed your WFU email address as your preferred means of contact.

Post-bar exam

- Check Symplicity and other resources periodically for any new opportunities.
- Update your resume to reflect your bar exam status. An example appears below.

BAR STATUS

Sat for the North Carolina Bar Examination, July 2017 (results pending)

EDUCATION

Wake Forest University School of Law, Winston-Salem, NC
Juris Doctor, May 2017

- Follow up with potential employers you contacted before the bar exam and with whom you have applications still pending. Update them on your bar and job search status and remind them that you are still seeking employment. Send them an updated resume.
- Set up informational interviews and develop a plan for targeted outreach. The eventual source of the postgraduate job for almost half of each graduating Wake Law class has typically come from their efforts of targeted outreach and the connections that they have made through professional, community, and family contacts.
- Join the local bar association and start attending meetings regularly. Also, work to connect with local attorneys, learn about the job market in the area, sit in and observe public courtroom proceedings, and begin making an impression on potential employers and future colleagues. The post-bar period is a good time to increase your visibility and make connections so that you will be considered for positions after bar results are released.
- Many localities have “specialty” bar associations, including those for diverse attorneys, women attorneys, and attorneys in specific practice areas (e.g., family law, criminal defense, etc.). These can be particularly effective for networking, as they tend to be smaller groups.
- Stay in touch with your contacts at Wake Forest Law. Your OCPD career advisor, professors, and deans are committed to helping you throughout your career. Keep your contacts updated on any changes in your employment status (for example, if you accept a temporary position or are volunteering), bar status, and practice area and geographic preferences. Also, stay in touch with your classmates, as they may learn of opportunities that are of interest to you.
- Keep your LinkedIn profile current.
- Finally, when the offer comes (and it will), please be sure to let your career advisor know. Wake Forest would like to celebrate with you and we are also required to report the information annually to the ABA.

Opportunities to Gain Experience

After you have taken the bar exam, it is essential to continue to build your resume and stay active in

the legal community while you are searching for a permanent position. There are a number of ways to gain experience while you are job searching.

- **Fellowships** – Volunteer fellowships are available with many governmental offices and non-profit organizations, including judges, district attorneys' offices, public defenders' offices, departments within the state Attorney General's office, and legal services providers. Many of these opportunities are unadvertised and informal. Reach out directly to the offices that interest you.
- **Pro Bono Work** – A number of state and local bar associations have pro bono programs and public service events for which they need volunteers. Participating in these programs is a great way to network within the bar and develop practical skills. The North Carolina Bar Association posts upcoming pro bono events throughout the state as well as ongoing pro bono activities at <http://www.ncbar.org/public-pro-bono/pro-bono-events>.
- **Temporary or Contract Positions** – Temporary or project-based positions for recent graduates are available through legal staffing agencies and, at times, directly through law firms. Some agencies that have hired recent graduates for temporary positions include: Synergy Legal Staffing, <http://synergylegalstaffing.com/>; Special Counsel, <http://www.specialcounsel.com>; Robert Half Legal, <http://www.roberthalf.com/legal/>; and National Association of Legal Search Consultants, <http://www.nalsc.org/membership/directory.cfm>.

Now, it's your turn. Write out a few concrete steps that you plan to take over the next few weeks and engage the help of a friend or advisor to help keep you accountable.

