

Duke University School of Law:

Our adjusted Summer 2020 plans and programming revolved around three themes: Working, Learning, and Connecting. First, we helped our students find and secure summer internships, leaning on our alumni and faculty to provide research opportunities to students whose internships had been shortened or cancelled. Next, we built out our “Enrichment Dashboard,” a webpage that housed learning opportunities, which students could access at-will over the summer to learn about various practice areas and legal issues. Some learning opportunities came from within the law school (e.g., the Law Library’s Legal Research Bootcamp), while others came from outside vendors like Forage (a company that creates virtual legal internships for major companies, including some law firms). Finally, we focused on helping students connect. We found creative ways to bring alumni and current students together for conversations about practice areas (our “coffee chats” and “what’s on your desk” programs).

Takeaways:

- **Lean on community in uncertainty.** Our greatest strength was our community. Remember to turn to your faculty, staff and alumni for ways to support students during an interrupted summer, or at any time!
- **Return to the basics.** We focused on helping provide what students typically gain during summer internships, including greater knowledge of practice areas, legal research and writing experience, and connections to and conversations with practicing lawyers.
- **Zoom small groups preferred.** Students enjoyed opportunities to connect on Zoom in smaller groups, with fewer Zoom boxes. We met this request as much as possible, with small alumni “coffee chats” as a favorite event.

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Northwestern Pritzker School of Law:

Our program had 2 focuses: providing professional development normally offered by in-person job experiences and maintaining a sense of community for the law students during a time of disruption. Before we even began programming, we focused on job creation – additional spots in our clinics, RA positions and alumni in smaller firms and companies who could host a law clerk or intern.

Then we pivoted to programming. At first we were driven by expediency - what can we put together quickly using internal resources (whether the Career Strategy Center, faculty or connected alums). As we progressed we began to make more deliberate choices and reach out to new/unconnected speakers. The focus was on pivoting to a new normal and trying to predict needs and trends based on past experiences, like the Recession in 2008-2009. We created a “Summer Professional Development” dashboard and listed resources and programs there.

Attendance did wane as the summer progressed, and we ended the program in July. By then we had installed other mechanisms for student engagement and most students had at least one part-time position plus credit-bearing classes. I think going forward we would want to set a commitment goal to encourage students to stay the course. Initially, sending a blast email and posting on our blog was sufficient to get very large outlets. By the end of the program we were reaching out individually to students we thought needed it most/ would benefit most. Surveys indicated it was lack of time/Zoom fatigue that led to decrease in attendance as opposed to lack

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of interest in later topics. We did record all programs and have kept them on our resource center/sent them to students as needed.

Takeaways:

- **Shorter:** Keep “planned” program portion to 30 minutes or less with time for questions
- **Allow Questions Multiple Ways:** Provide ample outlets to ask questions (raise hands, ask via chat, email in advance, surveying and sending out Myths & Truths after)
- **Asynchronous:** Very short asynchronous resources (10 minutes or under) released in advance preempted a lot of common questions and allowed the live programs to focus in a bit more
- **Get “Experts”:** While we all have a lot of legal market and PD knowledge, students really liked outside speakers with focused topics, especially if they were willing to take student email questions after the program. This was a great way to engage alums across the country since no one had to travel!
- **Reminders of What They Learned:** Ending with “main takeaways” in a bullet format, seemed to resonate and re-focus students who were worn out by Zoom.

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University of South Carolina School of Law

To support the continued professional development of students whose summer plans were disrupted or cancelled in light of the pandemic, the Career Services team at the University of South Carolina School of Law developed the Foundations for Professional Success Summer Series. The initiative was designed to provide students with an opportunity to build critical competencies, practical skills, and develop a plan to achieve their professional goals during these challenging times. The program had two components: programmatic and practical. The programmatic component was comprised of a series of six online seminars delivered by faculty, alumni, and other thought leaders. Each seminar focused on a critical competency (e.g., communication, relationship building, analytical and problem-solving skills, etc.) required to succeed as an entry-level attorney. The practical component consisted of engaging in several hours of community service (legal or non-legal), conducting informational interviews, preparing a Career Development Plan, and completing a research and writing assignment provided by an alumnus. Though the program was not credit-bearing, students could include their participation on their resume.

Takeaways

- **Re-Thinking Career Services Programming:** Often, traditional career services programming centers on job search strategies, practice areas, or practice settings (e.g., government and public interest versus private practice). However, we found that reframing our programming to focus on critical competencies allowed for much more engaging, complex, and robust discussions that helped students to consider not only their substantive interests, but also their strengths, weaknesses, and workplace values and goals. Moreover, the job search strategy, practice area, and setting content inevitably flowed through these broader discussions.
- **Interactivity in the Virtual World:** It is tempting to try to seamlessly convert in-person programming to a virtual environment, but it’s important to take the time to consider how to maximize interactivity and reduce the possibility of Zoom fatigue when living in a virtual world.
- **Just-in-Time Learning:** Even in a “normal” summer, career services offices should consider providing supplemental professional development programming to students. As they may be

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experiencing working in a legal setting for the first time, providing this programming over the summer will contextualize their experiences “just-in-time.”

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New York Law School

To provide a meaningful summer internship experience we developed the Venable-NYLS Summer Simulation Program, a virtual law office that provided students with real-world assignments related to COVID response throughout the legal industry. Students were assigned to one of three practice groups: litigation, transactional, or public policy, and each week they met with a different “managing” attorney to discuss a new assignment and the law/facts surrounding that matter. Students met again mid-week to discuss assignment progress, and then turned in the assignment to the managing attorney at the end of the week. Before beginning the next assignment, the group would debrief on both substance and form of the final work product. In addition to the substantive assignments, students in the program attended a formal orientation, which included training on billing, advanced research skills, law office writing style, and professionalism. Finally, each week the students attended a Leadership Lecture, featuring prominent lawyers (many of whom were alumni) discussing issues including diversity, communication, project management, passion & compassion, and mediation. As the name indicates, we received broad support from Venable LLP to administer the program. The students received 3 experiential learning credits (pass/fail) for their completion of the program.

(<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/venable-new-york-law-school-offer-virtual-summer-firm-program>) We will be offering the program again this summer.

Takeaways

- **Alumni Engagement** – we were able to find more than enough alumni to provide their time and talent to fill this internship void. This is a perfect way to incorporate those alums who have reached out to teach a course and/or who aren’t in the position to hire students at their office, but have a lot to offer.
- **Edit it Down** – We dreamt big in an effort to provide students with an inspirational opportunity during a particularly difficult time . . . and it was a ton of work. Not that work is a bad thing, but we could have edited down some of the bells and whistles and still had a superbly meaningful experience for the students. Especially during times like these, make sure you ask yourself “What is vital? What can I do without?”

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