

7 Levels of Legal Hierarchy

Law Firm or Law School

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

WORD BANK

EXEMPT STAFF

FIRM LEADERSHIP

ASSOCIATES

INCOME/NON-EQUITY PARTNERS & COUNSEL

EQUITY PARTNERS

STAFF ATTORNEYS

NON-EXEMPT STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

SUPPORT STAFF

STAFF

FACULTY

UNIVERSITY PROVOST

DEAN OF COLLEGE

Legal Organization Terminology

ASSOCIATES – LAWYERS WHO WORK UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PARTNERS OR SENIOR ATTORNEYS, TYPICALLY HANDLING LEGAL RESEARCH, DRAFTING DOCUMENTS, AND ASSISTING IN CASE PREPARATION, AND ARE ON PARTNERSHIP TRACK.

COUNSEL – ATTORNEYS WHO HOLD A SENIOR ADVISORY ROLE TO THE FIRM, OFTEN WITH SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE, BUT ARE NOT ON PARTNERSHIP TRACK.

DEAN OF COLLEGE – THE ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADER OF A LAW SCHOOL, RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERSEEING ALL ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL'S OPERATIONS.

EQUITY PARTNERS – ATTORNEYS AND PART-OWNERS WHO INVEST CAPITAL AND SHARE IN THE FIRM'S PROFITS AND LOSSES. THESE ATTORNEYS TYPICALLY HAVE VOTING RIGHTS ON IMPORTANT FIRM MATTERS AND OFTEN MANAGE CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS.

EXEMPT STAFF – EMPLOYEES WHOSE JOB DUTIES AND SALARY MEET SPECIFIC CRITERIA, EXEMPTING THEM FROM THE FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT (FLSA) REQUIREMENTS, AND HOLD PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS.

FACULTY – A GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS, TYPICALLY LAWYERS WITH EXPERTISE IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF LAW, WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR TEACHING AND CONDUCTING RESEARCH.

FIRM LEADERSHIP – INDIVIDUALS WHO GUIDE THE FIRM'S STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION, OFTEN LEADING DEPARTMENTS, COMMITTEES, AND GOVERNING BODIES, SUCH AS THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CHAIR, AND TOP-LEVEL EXECUTIVES.

INCOME/NON-EQUITY PARTNERS – SENIOR-LEVEL LAWYERS WHO OFTEN LEAD TEAMS AND MANAGE CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS AND RECEIVE GUARANTEED COMPENSATION.

NON-EXEMPT STAFF – EMPLOYEES WHO ARE ENTITLED TO MINIMUM WAGE AND OVERTIME PAY UNDER FLSA AND SUPPORT THE FIRM'S OVERALL STRATEGY AND WORK.

STAFF – ALL PERSONNEL, BEYOND FACULTY, WHO CONTRIBUTE TO THE OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF A LAW SCHOOL.

STAFF ATTORNEYS – SALARIED, NON-PARTNERSHIP TRACK ATTORNEYS WHO HANDLE ROUTINE LEGAL WORK, OFTEN FOCUSING ON SPECIALIZED AREAS OR REPETITIVE TASKS.

SUPPORT STAFF – THE PERSONNEL WHO PROVIDE ADMINISTRATIVE, CLERICAL, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS.

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT – THE HIGHEST-RANKING ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF A UNIVERSITY, RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERSEEING ITS OVERALL OPERATIONS.

UNIVERSITY PROVOST – THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER WHO OVERSEES THE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND FACULTY, WORKING CLOSELY WITH DEANS.

Build Your Support Network

Allies:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mentors:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Sponsors:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Colleagues With A JD:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Definitions & Key Terms

Allies – Individuals who support and stand up for others, often advocating for other’s rights and interests, especially in contexts where those individuals may face challenges or discrimination.

Attorneys – Professionals who are licensed to practice law, represent clients in legal matters, and provide legal advice. They may specialize in various areas of law, such as criminal, civil, corporate, or family law.

Juris Doctor (JD) – A professional graduate degree in law, typically required to practice law in the United States. It signifies that the holder has completed law school and is eligible to take the bar exam.

Lawyers – A general term for individuals who have studied law and are qualified to offer legal advice and representation.

Mentors – Experienced and trusted advisors who provide guidance, support, and advice to less experienced individuals, helping them develop their skills and advance in their careers or personal growth.

Sponsors – Influential individuals who actively advocate for and promote someone’s career advancement, often using their own network and resources to create opportunities for the person they are sponsoring.