Quarterly Report, Legal Master’s Interest Group

To: NALP Executive Board

From: Jaclyn Howell, Chair, Legal Master’s Interest Group

Re: Quarterly Report

Date: June 26, 2020

Executive Summary

The first quarter has unfortunately been relatively quiet for the Interest Group. We had our first group call on May 8th. Due to lack of attendance, we published the notes from the kickoff call for the majority of our members to review at their convenience. Our major focus this year will be on growing the interest group to include the (currently) non-NALP members who work in the Legal Master’s sphere.

Status & Activities

Section Conference Call
On May 8th, the Interest Group conducted the first quarterly call of the 2020-2021 academic year. Pascale Bishop, NALP Board Liaison to the Legal Masters Interest Group provided an update on NALP Business Plan, as well as the various projects that the NALP Leadership is working on.

Annual Education Conference RFPs
No new RFPs have been proposed for the 2020-2021 year. The group submitted two RFPs for the 2020 conference in Montreal, which we have encouraged members to resubmit for consideration for the 2021 conference in Scottsdale.

These RFPs submitted last year include:

- Embracing Technology to Meet Students Needs in the Distance Learning Era, Maureen Kieffer & Megan Bess
- Exploring the Professional Development Needs of Graduate Students in LLM & Legal Master’s Programs, Melissa Berry, Sarah Gruzas, Jose Gonzalez, Melanie Orhant

Bulletin Proposals

No new articles were proposed for the 2020-2021 year.

Strategic Goals & Challenges for the Upcoming Year

Last year, the group specifically focused on:
• Significant Anticipated Changes in Legal Masters Programs, specifically the continued proliferation of non-JD programs at law schools, the growth of online programs, and increased interest in or demand for more accountability or ABA regulation.
• Recommending that NALP be on the forefront of analyzing and creating best practices for legal master’s programs services and employment data. The most recent call in March partially focused on resource-sharing between schools with Legal Masters programs. The group recommended that NALP expand its membership to include JD Advantage employers, and to raise NALP member awareness of the legal master’s interest group, especially for those members who have expressed an interest in learning more about these programs and how to best serve students in legal master’s program.
• Recommending that NALP perhaps create a one-day summit to tie together individuals connected in some way to a legal master’s program to share information.
• Expressing a desire for a resource library on topics related to career services and how to best serve legal masters students.

In our initial call document, we posed the following questions to the group:

• Are there additional topics discussed last year that should be on this list?
• This year, would members like to continue to focus on these topics? What else would members like to discuss?
• I plan to send out additional “environmental scan” over NALP connect where we can further flush out ideas on what we all want to know. Do we want to establish our own “work groups” on topics of interest to the group?

At the end of May 2020, I sent a message regarding environmental scanning on the topic of Legal Masters Programs and their various COVID-19 responses. We asked our members to share information on the following questions:

• Has your LMS program shifted to remote operations in response to the COVID-19 outbreak?
• Will your school administer its Legal Master's program entirely online during the Fall semester? Spring? Summer? If your school is planning to accommodate LMS students in-person, what are the creative ways your school plans to do so?
• How is your Career Services Office engaging its Legal Master's students? One-on-one counseling? Group Counseling on specific topics?
• How has COVID impacted your programming? Career Services? Student Orientation? Student/Mentor Programming?
• What is your program's standard grading policy (letter grades on 4.0 scale, P/F, Credit/No Credit, etc.) Based on your standard grading policy, has your program adopted an optional credit/no credit or pass/fail grading option? How have current students responded to grading changes?
• Is your school exploring new recruitment ideas due to restrictive social distancing measures?
The environmental scan yielded no results. I reached out to Pascale and Melissa Berry (the 2019-2020 Interest Group Chair) for guidance. Pascale, in consultation with Beth Moeller, recommended that—at least for the first two quarters, we develop a database of Legal Masters personnel to encourage them to join the NALP calls and to engage in future environmental scanning. These are likely individuals who are not currently members of NALP. At some point in the future, we hope to encourage these individuals to join NALP in some capacity, which would greatly strengthen the interest group and promote its success. I have recognized that many of our current members work in Career Services Offices and may not have direct administrative responsibility for their school’s legal master’s programs. In such cases, I can appreciate the difficulty in being able to answer specific questions on behalf of other departments. If the group is specifically limited to support for CSOs that interact on a regular basis with legal master’s students, I am happy to limit the environmental scanning topics to those of interest to CSOs only. However, I see a strong opportunity here for NALP to attract legal master’s professionals as members which will allow the interest group to be at the forefront of information gathering and research, which strengthens NALP’s mission.