Guidelines for Surveying Your Graduates and Compiling Your Data: Tips from the Trenches

- ## Make It Easy for Your Graduates to Respond

  Regardless of how you collect information, whether via a survey or by having grads/students input their information directly, please provide them with the "NALP Graduate Employment Survey for the Class of 2026 FAQs." This Frequently Asked Questions document will help them to correctly provide the information requested. An explanatory cover memo or email is also suggested. This memo should stress the confidentiality of information provided, noting that the identifying information requested is necessary to enable you to follow up with non-respondents and with questions as necessary, but that no names or identifying information will be submitted to NALP. You may also wish to provide the "Graduates We Need Your Help" sheet to encourage responses from your graduates.

- ## Start Early and Follow Through

  Only a fraction of your graduates are likely to respond to your initial survey or to your request to complete information online. Therefore, it will be necessary to send, at minimum, one or two reminder messages to non-respondents. Ultimately, expect to call or text your most elusive graduates to obtain information. Put another way, only your concerted effort and persistence will garner complete and accurate information on your graduates. However, the graduate data you collect will provide you with valuable data to use in your interactions with students, employers, and other constituencies. You have until Friday, April 9, 2027 to track down those elusive graduates (though of course you are measuring their status as of Monday, March 15, 2027).

- ## Keep Asking Questions Until You Get Answers

  If you are not already doing so, a survey or data collection effort before graduation is highly recommended, to get as much information as possible before your grads leave campus. NALP posts the graduate survey form for the upcoming class before December students from that class graduate.

- ## Remember That Answers Can Change

  If you collected information at graduation, you should follow up with graduates known to have a job at that time and confirm that the information collected still holds true, and request updated information if it has changed. You should also follow up with graduates who were not employed, those known to have had a short-term position, and those who did not respond to your initial request. Remember that you will be reporting status as of March 15, 2027, and that for some graduates, this will have changed, for better or for worse, since graduation. **NOTE: WHEN YOU RECEIVE UPDATED INFORMATION ON A GRADUATE, BE SURE TO CHANGE ALL THE JOB INFORMATION.** For example, perhaps the graduate is no longer searching for a job other than that being reported, the job may have been obtained after bar results, or a description of an earlier job may no longer be accurate. Be sure to change any descriptor fields if needed. Be certain that job type information is not

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incongruent; for example having some information that indicates the job is in government and other information suggesting that the job is with a firm.

• Look At What Your Graduates Are Telling You

Upon receiving information, you or a staff member familiar with the ERSS process should review that information for accuracy and validity before it becomes "final." Graduates may not classify themselves correctly as to every aspect of their job. Adjustments may be necessary to conform with ERSS definitions. While the student or graduate is generally the best source of information, you will need to exercise your professional judgment and make adjustments as necessary when the student or graduate provides inconsistent, incorrect, or conflicting information/categorizations. If you received updated information as the result of a follow-up e-mail, telephone call, or other means, please be sure that all of the information submitted to NALP for each graduate reflects the latest input.

Note that if your students enter their own information, for example, into Symplicity, 12twenty, or into an online data collection system that you designed, it remains very important to carefully check what they have entered for accuracy, completeness, and conformity to ERSS definitions.

• Documentation

Be sure that you have documented your information in accordance with the Council's Protocol for Reviewing Law Graduate Employment Data, and Protocol for Collecting, Maintaining, and Reporting Law Graduate Employment Data posted at www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/employment-questionnaire-resources/.

• Survey Notes

Included in this package is a fillable PDF version of the survey which you may use to survey your graduates. This form and the accompanying FAQs are designed to encourage accurate and complete responses from graduates. As always, you may modify the master survey to add your own questions and/or develop your own survey form. The survey form is posted on NALP's website at www.nalp.org/erssinfo.

As noted above, your survey must include the graduate's name or some means of identifying and matching the survey with a specific individual, so that you can monitor responses and follow up with graduates who have not responded.

• If You Submit a Plain Text File Or Use The NALP Template (for non-Symplicity/12twenty users)

All data should be transferred to a file using the specifications provided by NALP. Contact the NALP office if you need this information.

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- ### Translate Job Locations To Codes

  You will need to "translate" the city and state job location information provided by your graduates into the corresponding 5-digit city codes provided by NALP. These codes are listed in the back of the instruction booklet. If you know just the state location of the job, but not the specific city, use the "Other/unknown" code for that state (e.g., a job in another or unknown town in Connecticut would be coded as 10799). Some vendor systems, such as Symplicity and 12twenty, will populate this code automatically in the NALP file. Make sure you have a complete employer address in order to ensure that the code transfers correctly.

And Finally.....

- ### Proofread, Count, And Double-Check

  Once information has been entered, completed online, or transferred to an electronic file, please check all the information for completeness and accuracy. Make use of any check and verification features available in your software. Also review page 3 of the instruction booklet ("Before you submit your data"). If you are using Symplicity, please check that city names are spelled exactly as shown in the instruction booklet. Symplicity looks for an exact match to convert a city name to the NALP code. For example, if the job location is entered as "Philly," the file for NALP will not have the city code for Philadelphia. And remember that information systems take everything literally, so for example, a salary of $225,000 which is entered as 225 needs to be corrected. Likewise, 60K is not a valid salary figure.

Questions? Contact the NALP office if you need help!

Email research@nalp.org

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