As employer members of NALP, we have developed this letter to give students additional insight into employers’ perspectives on the recruiting process. We think the following suggestions will help you interview more efficiently within the broad provisions of the NALP Principles for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process.

The recruiting season is a busy time for everyone involved—students, career services offices, and employers. Many students who are trying to balance academics and interviewing may not be aware that employers face similar challenges in trying to give all applicants careful consideration. For instance, for each callback visit, an employer schedules a round of interviews with its lawyers, considering factors such as areas of practice, educational background, and personal interests, so that the applicant and the employer have ample opportunity to learn about each other. When you take into account that each employer, depending on its size, may schedule from two to twenty or more interviews per day for a period of several weeks, you realize that interviewing takes up a significant amount of attorneys’ time and generates a huge volume of paperwork, email, and telephone calls.

To make the best use of everyone’s time and effort, given the dense nature of the process, there are certain guidelines that employers would like applicants to follow so that the process runs as smoothly as possible.

■ Focusing Your Search

Prior to beginning your job search, we recommend you take some time to reflect on your goals in terms of working environment, areas of practice, geographic preferences, and work-life integration. Employer websites and materials on file in your career services office provide extensive, reliable information about many employers that may be of interest to you. Review this information carefully. Do not assume that all of the information you read on legal blogs or find through internet searches is accurate. Do feel free to ask employers questions. The comments of fellow students who have worked or summered at employers in which you are interested can give you insight into the intangibles of the office’s culture. Speak with your career services office about their knowledge of particular employers. You should now have a basis for making informed comparisons among types of employers — comparisons that will prove invaluable as your search progresses.

As you prepare to interview, take advantage of your career services office for mock interviews and assistance with your résumé and cover letter. It is important to keep your career services office up to date on your job search.

■ On- and Off-Campus Interviewing

A few suggestions:

• Only request interviews with employers in which you have a genuine interest.

• When starting out your search for employers, start broadly and then get narrower. If you question whether your experience or credentials are a good fit with a particular employer, consult with your career services office before applying or requesting an interview with that employer.

• Use a variety of available resources to better inform your job search. Visit the employer’s website and review the employer’s materials on file in your school’s career services office and in the NALP Directory of Legal Employers (www.nalpdirectory.com). Other valuable research tools include Vault, Chambers, and other top-rated sites. These websites collect data from active associates and could prove useful tools for a student starting out in the process. Connect with career services to see if they can put you in touch with former summer associates (now 3Ls) that spent time at a firm in which you are interested.

• Prepare in advance so that you will be able to ask thoughtful questions during your interview.

• Be prepared to discuss your résumé in detail. Be certain that your résumé indicates a current mailing address, telephone number, and email address, and that you advise the employer of any changes at the time of the interview. Be prepared to answer questions about what is not on your résumé. Proofread your application materials, including your writing sample, for grammatical errors and typos.
• Have readily available copies of your current résumé, transcript, and a brief (7-10 pages) writing sample and be prepared to discuss them. For example, you graduated in summer 2016, but did not start law school until fall 2018, and there is nothing listed on your résumé during that two-year period; connection to/reason for interest in the geographic area where you are interviewing; etc.

■ Callback Interviews

If you participate in on-campus interviews (or arrange initial interviews on your own) and begin receiving callback invitations, it is time to focus your search further. We recommend that you apply the previously discussed focusing techniques to the information you have gathered from your initial interviews. You should then be able to make educated decisions about which callback invitations to accept.

When you receive a callback invitation, you have two options: schedule an interview or decline the invitation. If you are no longer interested in a particular employer or city, do not be concerned that your decision will be taken personally. Most employers have a limited number of invitations to extend; you are helping your fellow students by telling each employer as soon as possible that you will not be accepting its invitation.

Please keep the following in mind as you plan your interview strategy:

1. Respond promptly, preferably within two business days, to accept or decline callback invitations.

2. Schedule callback interviews only with employers that you are seriously considering.

3. Avoid rescheduling interviews unless absolutely necessary.

4. If you find it necessary to cancel or reschedule a callback interview, please do so as far in advance as possible as there will likely be penalty fees and/or nonrefundable airfares for which the employer will be obligated to pay. If working with your host firm’s travel agency, be sure to cancel or reschedule your travel arrangements directly with that agency in addition to letting the employer know. It is usually better to cancel a callback if you know you would not accept an offer from that employer. Employers will not be insulted; you will be saving them and yourself unnecessary time and effort. Of course, only cancel if you are sure you would not accept an offer, and do not forget to check the firm’s travel policy to confirm you will not incur non-refundable travel expenses.

5. When you call to schedule your callback, ask how much time to allot for your interview visit. If you receive a list of attorneys you will meet in advance of your interview, go to the employer’s website and review the bios of those attorneys. Arrange 5 to 10 minutes early for your interview, but if you arrive at the office more than 20 minutes early, you should look for a coffee shop in the area and wait there. Usually the recruiting staff is juggling many interviewees at once, and arriving too early can be disruptive.

6. Bring copies of your résumé, transcript, and a writing sample. (Please note: these requests vary from employer to employer.) If your writing sample is part of a work assignment from a previous employer, you should ask that employer for permission to distribute the document, and you should delete all identifying references to the client or the parties involved.

7. Make sure that you can be reached by telephone and email. You should give careful consideration to your voicemail greeting to be certain it is clear, concise, and professional. You should also provide your email address on your résumé.

8. Following a callback interview with an employer, if you do not wish to be considered for an offer, please inform the employer promptly and graciously that you wish to withdraw from consideration.

■ Additional Callback Tips

• Find out from your career services office if there are any 3Ls from your school who worked or summered at the firm. If so, reach out to those students to pick their brains before the interview. This may provide some inside tips on your interviewers and on the firm’s major practice areas that will help you demonstrate to the employer that you did your homework!

• Make sure you know what practice areas are “big” in the office for which you are interviewing. Employers may advertise many practice areas on their website, but only some of them may exist in the office for which you are interviewing. It is fine to express an interest in a niche practice, but make sure to convey the extent to which you are flexible and willing to try other practice areas as well.

• Remember to turn off your phone before your interview begins.

• You should send your thank you notes directly to the attorney(s)/staff members(s) you wish to thank. Customizing your thank you note for each interviewer to include a reference to something discussed during your interview with that person is typically well-received.
Reimbursable Expenses

After an initial on-campus interview — or an initial in-office interview you arranged on your own — some employers will reimburse you for expenses you incur, such as transportation, hotel accommodations, and meals. Discuss expense reimbursement policies and procedures before you travel to meet with the employers. Each employer has its own guidelines and limits with respect to travel reimbursement, and these policies may vary depending upon whether the interview resulted from an on-campus encounter or a write-in application as well as how far you are traveling for the interview. Students are responsible for finding out these policies before they travel, and employers are responsible for making these policies widely and easily available to students. Naturally, employers prefer that you take steps to save money when possible: visiting several employers in one trip and purchasing the lowest cost coach tickets are recommended.

An important note: many employers in a given city/region are willing to share expenses with the other employers you may be visiting in one trip. If you are visiting more than one employer during a single trip, inquire about their willingness to share expenses with the other employers (almost all will appreciate the opportunity to reduce their reimbursement costs through expense sharing). Typically, one of the employers you visit will serve as your “host” in the city/region, meaning that you will submit all of your expenses to that firm and the firm will contact the other employers directly about sharing the expenses. You will find sample reimbursement forms in the materials provided by many employers for on-campus interviews or on the employer’s website. If you don't find current forms, be sure to get them from the employer before you travel. Many employers state their reimbursement guidelines or limits on their forms.

Offers

When you receive an offer, be aware that employers must consider numbers seriously in the recruitment process. They extend only a certain number of offers because they know from past experience that a certain percentage (which differs from employer to employer) are accepted. If you receive an offer and have no intention of accepting it, please decline as quickly as possible, by telephone or email. If you decline by phone, following up with an email is encouraged. If you wait to decline, you may be preventing the employer from making an offer to another student. For those offers you are considering, you should carefully read offer letters and emails from employers and reaffirm your interest in the position in accordance with the employer’s instructions and your school's recruiting policies.

In all cases, you should be familiar with the NALP Principles for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process which are available at https://www.nalp.org/fair_ethical_recruitment, as well as your school's recruiting policies.

Do not be defensive if an employer asks where you will be working when you reject an offer. Employers often keep statistics about where students work. They may also be interested in the reasons for your decision and appreciate candor.

We hope these suggestions will be useful. We wish you well in the upcoming hiring season.