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Contacts: Nikia Gray, NALP Executive Director, ngray@nalp.org
Danielle A. Taylor, NALP Director of Research and Chief Data Strategist, dtaylor@nalp.org
Phone: (202) 835-1001

Law Student Recruiting Moves Earlier as Employer-Sponsored Hiring Expands, New Report Finds

Recruiting is happening earlier, more rapidly, and increasingly outside traditional channels, according to NALP's annual [*Perspectives on 2025 Law Student Recruiting*](#) report released today. The data underscore the continued shift toward employer sponsored recruiting methods, including direct application alongside accelerated timelines. During the 2025 recruiting cycle for 2026 2L summer programs, 80% of offers resulted from employer sponsored recruiting, compared to just 20% through law school sponsored methods such as on-campus interviewing (OCI). As alternative pathways have gained traction, timelines have fast-tracked, with most offers (85%) made before July. Acceptance rates also hit record levels, with 52% of all summer program offers accepted.

In her analysis on the timing of offers, NALP Executive Director, Nikia Gray, wrote, "The 2025 cycle not only reaffirmed the three-phase structure seen last year, but it also pulled the entire process materially forward." She added, "It should give us pause that, in a period already defined by significant institutional change and disruption, one of the forces exerting the most pressure on the structure of the first-year curriculum is not pedagogical reform or accreditation standards, but employer recruiting activity." This year's report also raises important questions about where the industry is headed. Gray said, "For employers seeking exit ramps from this race to the bottom, widening pipelines may be the most effective lever available."

Updated Reporting Categories for 2025

In the 2024 report, with the rise of law school early interview programs (EIP), firms were asked to report recruiting outcomes separately for OCI, EIP, and all other recruiting that took place outside of a law school interview program. As some law schools shifted their traditional OCI programs to the spring or early summer in 2025, this year's survey streamlines outcomes into two primary categories: law school sponsored and employer sponsored recruiting defined below.

Law School Sponsored Recruiting: Includes recruiting that takes place via law school sponsored recruitment programs (i.e., the law school set up and scheduled screening interviews on the law office's behalf). This includes any method for students to interview for 2L summer employment that is coordinated by a law school, group of law schools, or law student organizations, including OCI.

Employer Sponsored Recruiting: Includes recruiting that takes place via employer sponsored recruitment (i.e., the law firm/employer set up and scheduled student interviews). This includes any method for students to apply and interview for 2L summer employment that is coordinated by an employer.

Firms provided office-level data to the extent possible within the survey, but in some instances, firms were only able to provide firm-wide or multi-office data.

Key Findings:

Summer 2025 Programs and Outcomes

- Nationally, the average number of 2L summer associates per individual office was eight in 2025, down from nine in 2024, and 10 in 2022 and 2023. This is the smallest average 2L class size per office since 2020, when many firms canceled or scaled back their programs due to the pandemic.
- By geographic market, New York City had the largest class sizes, with an average of 29 2L students per office during summer 2025.
- The offer rate from 2L summer programs (to return post-graduation as an entry-level associate at the firm) held steady at 97%, unchanged from 2024.
- For the fourth year in a row, the offer acceptance rate exceeded 89%. The 2025 rate was 89.4%, down just slightly from the record high of 89.6% in 2024.
- The offer rate to 1L summer associates (to return for the 2L 2026 summer program) increased by 3.5 percentage points to 94.2%, an all-time high. The acceptance rate for those offers declined by three percentage points, dropping to 72.3%.
- Overall, 75% of 1Ls who accepted a 2L summer return offer will spend the entire 2026 summer with their firm, down from 79% during the previous summer.
- A new item was added to the 2025 survey to capture the prevalence of jumbo offers, which are offers extended simultaneously to a first-year student for employment during both their 1L and 2L summers. During the 2025 recruiting cycle (for 1L summer 2025/2L summer 2026 programs), 10% of offices with a 1L summer program made at least one jumbo offer.
- Of those offices that made jumbo offers, 87% offered a bonus or other financial incentive to encourage acceptance of the 2L portion of the offer.

2025 Recruiting for Summer 2026 Programs

- For the second year in a row, direct application was the most frequently cited method by law offices to recruit 2L students (93%), followed by law school recruitment programs (e.g., OCI) at 71%, and resume collects (64%).
- Overall, 80% of the offers made for 2026 2L summer programs resulted from employer sponsored recruiting and 20% resulted from law school sponsored recruiting.
- In 2025, 47% of callback interviews resulted in offers for summer 2026 positions, a decrease of two percentage points from the previous recruiting cycle. Since 2023, offer rates have fallen below the historical range of 50-58% observed from 2014-2022.
- Offer and acceptance rates for summer programs typically move in opposite directions (meaning that they are inversely related), a pattern that held true again in 2025 after deviating from this norm in 2024. In 2025, the acceptance rate increased by three percentage points, growing to a new record high of 52%. This is the third consecutive year of record acceptance rates.
- By method, offer rates were higher for employer sponsored recruiting (49%) as compared to law school sponsored recruiting (39%). However, offer acceptance rates were higher for offers that resulted from law school sponsored methods (55%) as compared to employer sponsored (51%).
- Overall, total offer volume for summer 2026 2L programs was essentially flat, increasing by just 0.4% as compared to the prior recruiting cycle.
- The median number of 2L 2026 summer program offers extended per office was four, an all-time low.

- In 2025, 85% of all offers were extended prior to July, compared to 34% of all offers in 2024. May 2025 was the most popular offer month (36%), followed by June (29%), and then April (15%).
- However, there were significant differences in the timing of offers by recruiting method. Offers that resulted from employer sponsored recruiting were commonly extended in May 2025 or earlier (65% of offers made via this method), while June was the most popular timeframe to extend offers that resulted from law school sponsored recruiting (42%).

Read/purchase the full report at: www.nalp.org/perspectivesonrecruiting. Media interested in requesting a copy of this members-only report should contact media@nalp.org.

About NALP

NALP is an association of more than 3,000 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That's why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and ethical principles for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For more than 50 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve. NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at www.nalp.org/pressreleases. For more information, contact NALP at info@nalp.org or call (202) 835-1001.