Office of Career & Professional Development

3L Career Planning Update

Making the Most of Winter Break

As the semester is winding down and you’re focused on exams, it is also important to think about ways to make the most out of your time off over winter break, including job searching and building your professional network. These few weeks off provide a great opportunity for you to work on your career plans without the time demands that you face throughout the semester.

Here are some key tips for effectively using your time:

**Meet with your career coach before you leave for break.** Now is the time to meet with your career coach to get your resume and cover letter polished, before you meet with prospective employers over the break. We can also talk about expanding your career search, researching employment options, and developing contacts.

**Check e-mail and Symplicity over break to stay up-to-date on the latest job postings.** The OCPD staff will continue to update job postings over break, and may send out emails with important announcements.

**Set up informational interviews.** Winter break is a great time to meet with professionals in the field(s) that interest you. Start researching employers as soon as possible, then contact them to set up a time to meet during your break. Keep in mind that many people take time off over the holidays, so the sooner you contact them to schedule a meeting, the better. Also, try to be as flexible as possible as to the day and time of your meeting to make it convenient for the professional. Don’t forget to follow up by sending a personal note to the person who took the time to meet with you.

**Visit prospective employers.** If you are applying for jobs at home, your winter break is a good time to follow up in person with potential employers. An in-person visit to the employer’s office can leave a lasting impression and can make you stand out from other candidates. Of course, you want to make sure that you are leaving a positive lasting impression, so be sure to dress professionally and be considerate of the employer’s time constraints.

**Plan for the bar exam.** If you haven’t already done so, you will need to decide which bar exam to take very shortly – see the next page for things to consider in making your decision. If you know which bar exam you will be taking, use the break to work on the onerous application process. Most states require that you provide myriad documents, including transcripts, driving records, criminal background checks, etc. Use your time over break to collect this information.

OCPD Winter Break Schedule

The Office of Career & Professional Development, along with the rest of the Wake Forest campus, will be closed from Monday, December 26 through Monday, January 2. We will be here and ready to assist you January 3, 2012.
HOW DO I DECIDE WHICH BAR EXAM TO TAKE?

With bar application deadlines looming, some of you may be facing the question of which bar exam to take. This can be a challenging question if you don’t have a job lined up or are not sure where your path after law school will lead.

Some reasons that SHOULD affect your decision:

"Being close to my family while taking the bar exam and looking for a job will help me financially.* If your employment status is uncertain, having the support (financial and moral) of your family can help to relieve some of the pressure; you don’t want to commit to moving somewhere that you can’t afford to live. Moving to an area where your family lives or where you grew up might also give you some initial professional contacts.

"I hate the snow; I know I have to live in the south.* OR "I can’t stand traffic; I want to live in a small town." Considering the attributes of a particular location (including size, traffic, climate, amenities, etc.) is important in deciding where you may want to live and work. If you are considering a particular area where you have not lived before, do your research, visit the area, and then factor these types of considerations into your decision.

"My wife or husband, or soon-to-be, wants to go back to school, and this area provides the best programs for him or her." If you are married, will be married, and/or have a family, it is important to take into account what a particular location offers your spouse and/or family. Even if you think that your “dream job” will be in a particular area, you must consider their career options, educational opportunities, etc.

"I have made most of my contacts in this place; I think I can develop professional connections here faster than starting from scratch somewhere else." If you have already begun building your professional network in a particular area, it may make sense to focus your job search there, especially if you do not feel comfortable going to a new area and establishing a new network there.

Some reasons that should NOT affect your decision:

"I heard there were jobs in Idaho.*" Moving to an unfamiliar location simply because you heard that the job market may be better is not necessarily a good strategy. First, the job market in any location is what you make of it; if you are persistent and focused in your job search, you will likely secure a position in your desired area. Second, keep in mind that there is more to the job search than just finding any job — you have to live in this particular area. If you are unhappy there, you probably will not have job satisfaction either.

"Some attorneys I know told me they would help me find a job in Texas, even though I have never been there." As a job seeker, you want to make sure that you are familiar with the area where you’re intending to move. Otherwise, you may find that you are unhappy and want to relocate. This will mean that you likely will need to take another bar exam. Reciprocity varies greatly from state to state, but generally requires several years of active practice before you can qualify. You also should be able to demonstrate your commitment to a particular area. Employers spend a lot of resources training and developing new hires, and they may not want to take a chance on someone who may leave shortly after being hired.

"I heard my chances would be better with a big firm if I took the New York or California bar." If you are committed to a certain practice area, it makes sense to move to an area where that particular specialty is needed. If you are seeking a firm job, however, passing a particular state’s bar exam probably will not be enough to get your foot in the door. Instead, you should focus on getting some work experience and building your network in the geographic area where you want to live. Many firms hire lateral attorneys who have demonstrated their abilities and distinguished themselves in the legal community.
If you are taking the NC bar exam in July, here are some helpful tips from the Board of Law Examiners’ presentation earlier this semester:

**Timing:** *Regular deadline:* The application must be postmarked by January 3, 2012. Get started on the process early. Note that some of the records you need take a considerable amount of time to obtain (most notably, DMV records). If you file by the January 3 deadline, you may receive a grace period to file additional or amended documentation.

*Late deadline:* To meet the late application deadline, the application must be postmarked by March 6, 2012. There is a $250.00 late fee. If you use the late filing deadline, you will not be permitted to file additional or amended documentation.

**Character and fitness evaluation:**
Disclosing past or current mental health and substance abuse treatment will not negatively impact your application. You are encouraged to seek treatment, but it must be disclosed.

**Debt disclosure:** This includes credit cards, car loans, student loans, etc. Make sure that you have documentation for all debts.

* For credit cards, if you pay off the balance in full every month, list the balance as of the date that you file your application. You can list it with a notation stating that the balance is paid off monthly.

* If you have delinquent debt, you will need to fill out a payback schedule form detailing the efforts you have made with the creditor to repay the debt. Delinquent debt generally will not impact your application if you are making an effort to repay it.

* Before you file your application, get a copy of your credit report from one of the three major credit reporting services. These can be requested for FREE at www.annualcreditreport.com - the Board uses Experian. If a debt shows up on your credit report, it must be disclosed.

**New this year** Wake Forest will send your law school application to the Board of Bar Examiners. You do not need to obtain a separate copy for your bar application. If you need to amend your law school application, see Dean Gibbs and the Admissions office.

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**ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS…**

⇒ For more information on the bar exams of various states you may be considering, visit the National Conference of Bar Examiners’ website at www.ncbex.org. This site provides information regarding multistate tests and bar admission requirements for each state.

⇒ If you have determined where you want to live and work, research the state and local bar associations in that area. You may be able to join as a student member at minimal or no cost. Many bar associations have active student and young lawyer divisions, which can lead to contacts and connections for you.

⇒ Think outside the box. You may already know where you want to work and live following law school, but are you too focused on a particular city? Be sure to consider suburbs and smaller towns in close proximity to your preferred city. The OCPD has compiled a list of towns located in close proximity to many of the major cities where Wake Law graduates seek employment; see your career coach for more information.

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*All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.*

~ Walt Disney
NEWS & NOTES

Happy Holidays!!

Take some time to rest over break, reflect on all you’ve accomplished, appreciate your family and friends, and enjoy your free time.

See you in January....