

The Cycles of Career Services: Diary of a CSO Professional

by Victor C. Massaglia

Monday, April 30 — I sit down at my desk the morning after returning from my first NALP conference. Agggggh!! Although I am energized, there was so much information, and I have so little brain space. What can I do? Where do I start? What matters most? When does my head stop spinning?

Suddenly, I reflect on calming words I remember from a seasoned NALPer: “Stop. Breathe. It will be okay. The beauty of career services and recruiting is that we follow a cycle. Some months will be busy. Some months will be really busy. And sometimes it slows down.”

Reflecting on this excellent wisdom, I’d like to walk you through the “Cycles of Career Services.”

Summer is just around the corner. As students focus on their finals, it’s a good time to play catch-up and an excellent time for planning. If you’re at a school, consider scheduling your vacation. Yes, a vacation. Fewer students are around and employers are busily engaged with their summer associates and interns. You can also take the time to follow up with a quick hello to all the wonderful NALPers you just met. In addition:

- Schedule an office retreat to reflect on and celebrate past accomplishments, establish strategic goals, and plan programming, events, marketing, and other activities for the upcoming school year.
- Develop relationships and follow up with employers whom you’d really like to see on campus.

- Be aware of judicial clerkship deadlines and processes. Also, review the Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) manuals.
- Review and update your website content and format as well as your programming materials.
- Fine tune your OCI processes and coordination.

As the summer passes, a warning heralds the imminent change of season. Students begin trickling in, requesting help preparing for the Loyola Patent Interview program in August. Others are engaged in résumé drops for fall interviews. Judicial clerkship applications must also be sent out or uploaded by the day after Labor Day.

As your tasks begin to accumulate, you must:

- Make sure you are lining up attorneys for mock OCI interviews and confirming the logistics of your on-campus and off-campus interview programs.
- Remind your public interest students that applications for many federal honors programs and fellowships are due in September, so students should start preparing now.

As fall arrives and the school year starts, that’s not a freight train hitting you. It’s OCI.

Fortunately, you have planned well and the feeling of taking a drink through a firehose will be

short-lived. So remember to breathe in and breathe out. Also:

- As you are hosting your employers and shepherding students, continue program planning and preparing for 1Ls.
- Most offices schedule a big workshop in November to introduce 1Ls to the career services office and its services. Many offices also schedule one-on-one career counseling sessions with all first-year students.

Once the OCI storm passes and the 1Ls are on their way, it's time to reflect, catch up, and be surprised to learn the color of the top of your desk. In January, you should:

- Consider attending the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) annual conference, where many law school career services professionals gather to hear what's going on in the world of legal education and to meet with student services and admissions professionals.
- January and February are also the months where you will play detective and search for alumni in preparation for submitting employment information to NALP.

- Speaking of NALP, consider presenting at the conference, writing an article, and/or continuing building relationships with your fellow colleagues.

Moving in tandem with the academic cycle, your year in career services will eventually wind down and you will suddenly find yourself wishing graduates good luck in their new legal careers (and reminding them to say in touch!) while thoughts of greeting a new crop of eager, nervous, promising students are in the back of your mind.

Although your work life may at times be hectic and or stressful, try to savor each phase of the career services whirlwind. After all, your daily efforts and your hair-on-fire days will pay off because you have successfully helped your students with their career goals.

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