

# OCS Weekly Bulletin

April 14, 2009

Upcoming Programs/Events & Career-Related Articles

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## About OCS

The Office of Career Services (OCS) serves as a bridge between students, alumni and employers. The staff helps students and alumni to shape and realize their career goals. We also provide counseling, workshops and resources on judicial clerkships, international opportunities and non-law alternatives.

OCS is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The office is located on the first floor in Room 143 in the Law School's office building on Nathan Abbott Way.

## Upcoming Programs/Events

- **“How to Survive Your Summer”**- Tuesday, April 14th at 12:45pm
- **Human Rights Pro Bono Work at Reed Smith**- Wednesday, April 15th at 12:45pm
- **Fall 2009 OCI Orientation**- Thursday, April 23rd at 12:45pm

**“How to Survive Your Summer”**- Tuesday, April 14th at 12:45pm

Join hiring attorneys and recruiting managers for an informative discussion on what you can do to have a successful summer. Don't miss this program if you're heading to firm this summer!

### Our panelists will include the following:

Chris Boyd, Wilson Sonsini LLP  
 Kristen Major, Skadden LLP  
 Melainie Mansfield, Millbank LLP  
 Ian Feinberg, Mayer Brown LLP

Lunch will be served. Please sign up in *Symplicity*.

**Human Rights Pro Bono Work at Reed Smith**- Wednesday, April 15th at 12:45pm

Are you interested in international human rights? Do you want to work at a big firm? Wish you could do both? Come meet attorneys from Reed Smith who are doing just that!

Save the date: April 15th, 12:45 pm, Room 230.

Sponsored by the Stanford International Human Rights Law Association.

More information to come. Please contact Nicole Daro (ndaro@stanford.edu) with questions and comments.

**Fall 2009 OCI Orientation**- Thursday, April 23rd at 12:45pm - Room TBA

If you are planning to participate in this Fall's OCI program, please attend this orientation as we'll be going over important information regarding the logistics of the program, as well as discussing the current market and how it may affect this Fall's program. We'll also be answering any questions you may have.

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# Career-Related Articles

## • **A Busy First Quarter for Law Firm Mergers**.....Page 2

The first quarter of 2009 was a busy one for law firm pairings, according to Altman Weil’s latest MergerLine report. During the first three months of the year, law firms announced 24 mergers and acquisitions, and 12 previously announced mergers went into effect. The mergers primarily involved the acquisition of smaller firms -- those with 25 or fewer attorneys. But Altman’s Thomas Clay warns that the relatively high number of couplings in the first quarter does not mean 2009 will be a hot year for mergers.

## • **Five Key Suggestions to Help Summer Associates Get Offers From Their Firms in a Difficult Economy**.....Pages 3-4

This summer, in light of the recession, it is widely expected that summer associates at many law firms will not receive offers virtually automatically; instead, only some will receive them. Moreover, the work given to summer associates is likely to be much more challenging than in prior years – in part so that firms can make smart decisions as to which summer associates to hire, out of a given class.

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### **A Busy First Quarter for Law Firm Mergers**

Karen Sloan  
The National Law Journal  
April 08, 2009

The first quarter of 2009 was a busy one for law firm pairings, according to Altman Weil’s latest MergerLine report.

During the first three months of the year, law firms announced 24 mergers and acquisitions. Additionally, 12 previously announced mergers went into effect.

The new mergers primarily involved the acquisition of smaller firms -- those with 25 or fewer attorneys. Only one merger occurred between two sizable firms, which was K&L Gates’ combination with Bell, Boyd & Lloyd, a Chicago firm with about 250 attorneys.

Altman Weil principal Thomas Clay attributes the dearth of large-firm mergers to the fact that bigger firms generally have been hit hardest by the economy, specifically with the evaporation of capital markets and corporate legal work.

“The bulk of these deals were in the works in 2008,” Clay said. “As law firms got a look at how 2009 was shaping up, the activity definitely slowed but didn’t stop.” Clay said he doesn’t think that the relatively high number of couplings in the first quarter indicate that 2009 will be a hot year for mergers.

Instead, he said that the merger market may well cool off as the year wears on. He added there do not appear to be a significant amount of law firm pairings in the pipeline right now.

“We don’t think you can take the first quarter figure and multiply it by four to get an idea of what we will see,” Clay said. “We think it will be something less than that. There aren’t any white knights out there, but there are some firms that are still looking, if they are in the right position.” Many firms may be more focused on stemming their own financial losses and attorney layoffs than aggressively pursuing mergers, Clay said.

Six more firm mergers took place in the first quarter of 2009, compared with the same period in 2008, when 18 combinations were announced.

There was also an international element to the recent merger announcements, with two large firms acquiring smaller ones outside the United States. Jones Day scooped up Mexico City firm De Ovando y Martinez del Campo, while McGuireWoods acquired Grundberg Mocatta Rakison in London.

Among the prominent mergers that went into effect in the first quarter of 2009 were the combination of Bryan Cave and Powell Goldstein, and the merger between two Kansas City firms to become 500-attorney Polsinelli Shugart.

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## Five Key Suggestions to Help Summer Associates Get Offers From Their Firms in a Difficult Economy

By Julie Hilden

Monday, Feb. 2, 2009

FindLaw.com

This summer, in light of the recession, it is widely expected that summer associates at many law firms will not receive offers virtually automatically; instead, only some will receive them. Moreover, the work given to summer associates is likely to be much more challenging than in prior years – in part so that firms can make smart decisions as to which summer associates to hire, out of a given class.

Having been a summer associate twice, and then later an associate reviewing summer associates' work, I'd like to offer some advice to summer associates on how they can maximize their chances of getting an offer, even in a very difficult economy.

### Enlist An Associate as Your Ally

Ideally, as a summer associate you'll be assigned an associate as your mentor. And certainly, there'll be an associate overseeing you on each of the cases on which you work. Ask him or her to look over your memoranda and other documents before they are turned in to the partner – and give him or her plenty of time to do so, and plenty of warning. That might mean that you need to complete the memo that is due on Friday by, say, Thursday morning. In this economy, it's worth burning the midnight oil to do that, in order to make a good impression. It's not just that the associate's comments are likely to improve the quality of your legal work; it's also that the associate can help ensure that the tone and structure of your memo are professional and fit the firm's style.

If the associate is too busy or disinclined to help, exchange drafts with a fellow summer associate whom you respect and can trust – perhaps someone from the same law school as you. Indeed, to truly be a perfectionist about your work, you might want to take advantage of comments from both the associate and your fellow summer associate.

### Seek Preparation in the Areas of Law That Interest Your Firm

When I was a summer associate after my first year of law school, I found myself starting from square one in the areas of

law the firm where I was working practiced – such as corporate law, taxation, securities regulation, and bankruptcy. It was a wake-up call, and I took all four of those courses during the next year. To avoid making a similar mistake, bone up on the areas of law your firm favors, even if your course schedule for Spring is already set and it means auditing a course or reading a hornbook (not a commercial outline; you need greater depth).

If you don't do so, you risk not even fully understanding the assignments you receive. One student I knew in law school (who was otherwise a brilliant person) received an initial summer-associate assignment and afterward commented, "I think the partner asked me to shepherd this through, or something?" Fortunately, a kind associate explained how to Shepardize. Beyond basics like Shepardizing, every area of law has its terms of art – and partners expect you to understand the assignment when they give it to you. Going back to ask follow-up questions can make a poor impression on the partner – but is still better than forging ahead without a full understanding of the assignment and turning in a memo that totally misses the mark.

### Consider "Counter-Programming"

There's also a corollary to my suggestion of learning about the areas on which your firm focuses: Don't necessarily pick the most popular one, among all these areas, to be the one where you seek to concentrate your summer-associate time. The idea is similar to counter-programming: Rather than having the most popular show on television, some producers decide to focus on having a reliable niche audience instead.

Let's say your firm focuses on general litigation, but has a handful of lawyers who focus on legal malpractice defense in particular. It's possible that you will stand out among the members of your summer associate class if you go to those few legal-malpractice lawyers early in the summer, and express strong interest in and knowledge of what they do. (Here is where the advice above about prepping, through hornbooks and auditing, will

come in handy.) Not only will it be flattering for them to hear that you picked out their sub-area of the law in particular, but it will also show that you have something in common with them even at the start of your summer.

While this is a risky strategy in that you may meet fewer lawyers at the firm, it may pay off because you will have a strong constituency to lobby on your behalf – and they will be listened to, because it is they who will work with you when you join the firm. If you are the only one who has read a hornbook on Legal Malpractice and the only one who has specifically expressed interest in their sub-area, then for them, you are the only game in town. Thus, if you excel in your work, they will fight for you. If even one partner says, "I really want this person," that could seal your fate.

Especially effective might be "counter-programming" in an area where you have more background than other law students, or one that is seen as dry or difficult. For instance, if you were an Economics major, you have a massive advantage as a future antitrust lawyer. And if you choose to work on bankruptcy or tax cases, you'll find that these areas of law are far more interesting than they are reputed to be, and yet may scare other summer associates away. But make sure the practice group you select makes sense in terms of the recession; real-estate and corporate lawyers will predictably be suffering.

### Use Several Different Approaches or Searches When You Do Research

It's obviously important, too, not to make any glaring research mistakes when you turn in work. If you miss one major case in one memo, that's a serious problem. But avoiding errors is easier said than done. What are the best methods to make sure you don't do so – beyond asking associates and peers to look over your work, as I recommended above?

During this Spring semester, I would advise taking advantage of the expertise of the computer research company representatives who visit your campus, to ensure that you are completely fluent when it

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## Five Key Suggestions to Help Summer Associates Get Offers From Their Firms in a Difficult Economy

(continued from page 3)

comes to legal research. Then, when you become a summer associate, remember to use multiple different searches and sources for your research.

Also, spend a little initial time acquainting yourself with the general area of law that relates to the memo topic. If you have an antitrust assignment, know the holdings of the Supreme Court's recent antitrust cases to get the lay of the land, and see if you can find a law review article that will swiftly get you up to speed on the sub-area of antitrust you are researching.

### Make Clarity in Writing a Priority

Just by reading a memo's first paragraph, a partner or associate will instantly sense whether it is well-written or not. Reading Eugene Volokh's legal writing book will get you up to speed on the standards and how to meet them, but make sure to remember that a law firm memo – unlike, say, a law review article – needs to reach definite conclusions as to what the best interpretation of the law is and how the firm or client should proceed forward. Equivocation will leave the partner – and the client – better-informed, but still

without any clear guidance. Every memo needs to have a bottom-line conclusion or recommendation.

Also, if you feel that writing is a weakness for you, make sure to follow three simple rules: (1) Put facts in chronological order. (2) Use section headings to make organization clear. (3) Use shorter sentences whenever you can, because they are clearer and faster to read.

A legal memo is supposed to provide clarity, so a confusing memo misses the point. The area of law might be confusing, but the memo still has to be clear. If the particular area of law is truly a mess, then isolate a few clear alternative viewpoints in the morass. Don't be afraid to make predictions about how future courts might rule as long as you back them up, appropriately qualify them, and also describe the alternatives.

Finally, it's more difficult to advise on the social aspect of being a summer associate, since the style of firms differs greatly, but it plays a genuine role in whether you will get an offer. Some advice is obvious: Show up for most of the events – and ideally all of them -- but not at the cost of the quality of your legal work. Realize that the partners' and asso-

ciates' spouses will have opinions of you, too – and those opinions may affect how you are perceived. Use events not just to meet people, but, even more important, to deepen connections you've already made – chatting with partners and associates with whom you've worked or would like to work.

Remember, too, that you can guarantee that you will never get an offer at an event – by drinking too much or otherwise behaving badly. Try to end the summer not only having left a terrific impression, but with the feeling that several individuals there like and respect you, and feel some investment in your success. Whereas once being a summer associate simply meant getting by, now it means standing out.

*Julie Hilden, who graduated from Yale Law School, practiced First Amendment law at the D.C. law firm of Williams & Connolly from 1996-99 and has been*