

OCS Weekly Bulletin

April 21, 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

- **Q&A on Delayed Start Dates & Deferrals**- Wednesday, April 22nd at 12:45pm
- **Fall 2009 OCI Orientation**- Thursday, April 23rd at 12:45pm

Q&A on Delayed Start Dates & Deferrals- Wednesday, April 22nd at 12:45pm in Room 280A

Has your firm pushed back your start date? Has it offered you a stipend to defer until Fall, 2010? If so, you should plan to attend this program. We'll discuss the pros and cons of taking a deferral, key issues to think about in making that decision, how best to use your fall months if your start date has been pushed into 2010, and more logistical questions about your loans, the bar exam, insurance, etc.

In addition to the OCS staff, Faye Deal and Frank Brucato will be on hand to answer LRAP and loan questions and we are working to have a representative from Vaden Health Center be available to answer insurance related questions.

If you wish, you may send questions & issues you would like discussed to Laura Flores (lflores@law.stanford.edu) and she will make sure they are covered at the meeting.

Fall 2009 OCI Orientation- Thursday, April 23rd at 12:45pm - Room 190

Attendance is *mandatory for all 1L students* who plan on participating in the fall interview program. Due to the state of the market, and the likely effects it will have on this year's recruiting program, it is essential that you are there to hear important information and have your questions answered.

For 2Ls planning to participate in OCI, attendance is strongly encouraged. We will be sending out the Fall OCI packet shortly with more detailed information. The packet will also be available online here: [http://www.law.stanford.edu/experience/careers/ocs/students/\(oci\)_on-campus_interviewing_program_](http://www.law.stanford.edu/experience/careers/ocs/students/(oci)_on-campus_interviewing_program_).

Career-Related Articles

• **No Guilt, No Anxiety; Firm Touts Flex Time**..... Pages 2-3

Most law firms offer flexible or reduced-hours schedules for attorneys, especially working mothers. But observers say there is often a large gap between the concept and reality of working part-time. Five of the 11 associates at Schirrmester Diaz-Arrastia Brem are mothers who work part-time schedules, and partner Michael Brem said offering flexible schedules has been a key to snagging talented women attorneys who may otherwise have left the practice of law.

• **3Ls Do the Grim Math on Job Market**..... Pages 3-4

The nation's 200 accredited law schools will spit out about 43,000 graduates next month, with roughly half of those lawyer-hopefuls expecting to take jobs in private practice. They will be entering an employment market that already is swarming with thousands of laid-off associates who are in about as much demand as a five-year lease on a full-size Hummer. The upshot is a massive pile-up of attorneys looking for work in an environment that is pitting would-be attorneys against more experienced competitors.

• **Office Etiquette Essentials**.....Pages 5-7

Dramatic faux pas don't happen every day. Still, law school career counselors and law firm personnel report that law students and new lawyers routinely make etiquette missteps during their job searches and at the office. At best, poor job search or workplace etiquette can tarnish your professional reputation. At worst, it could cost you your job or a job offer.

No Guilt, No Anxiety; Firm Touts Flex Time

National Law Journal
Karen Sloan / Staff reporter
April 20, 2009

Laura Friedl Jones spent a recent Thursday morning not behind her desk at Houston litigation boutique Schirrmester Diaz-Arrastia Brem, but at her 4 1/2-year-old son's preschool Easter egg hunt.

Ducking out of the office for a few hours to attend a family event isn't unheard of in the law firm world, but one important difference sets Jones apart from many of her attorney counterparts who attempt to balance their work and home lives: She didn't feel guilty or anxious about spending her morning snapping photos instead of billing hours.

Five of the 11 associates at Schirrmester Diaz-Arrastia Brem are mothers who work part-time schedules, and partner Michael Brem said offering flexible schedules has been a key to snagging talented women attorneys who may otherwise have left the practice of law.

Concept, and reality

Of course, most law firms offer flexible or reduced-hours schedules for attorneys, especially working mothers. But observers say there is often a large gap between the concept and reality of working part-time.

"I find that a lot of people give lip service to the idea of, 'We can work out alternative arrangements,' " said Jones, who previously worked at Baker Botts. "But when push comes to shove, some people will look at a part-time attorney and say, 'She's not thoroughly engaged.' "

Jones and several of her part-time colleagues at Schirrmester Diaz-Arrastia Brem say that negative attitude is absent at their firm. They say that the firm recruited its part-time attorneys with promises of flexibility and has followed through on those assurances.

Brem said the firm — which was started by former Baker Botts attorneys and has been around for four years in its current incarnation — realized that larger firms essentially drive away talented women attorneys because they are inflexible when it comes to work schedules. His own wife struggled to keep working at a large firm after having twins nine years ago and eventually left, he said.

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No Guilt, No Anxiety; Firm Touts Flex Time

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“I watched at Baker Botts as these exceedingly talented women left because they couldn’t make it work at the big firm,” he said.

Baker Botts has a formal “alternative work schedules” program, said partner Rebecca Robertson, who coordinates those attorneys in the firm’s Houston office. At any given time, several attorneys in Houston are working part-time, she said. “Now, part-time is pretty much part of the fabric at Baker Botts and has become much more common at most firms,” said Robertson, who helps attorneys interested in working an alternative schedule write proposals to be submitted to the firm. “We try to come up with proposals that work for the attorney and the firm.”

Before coming to Schirrmeyer Diaz-Arrastia Brem a year ago, Janet Garza didn’t know if working part-time would be feasible after she had her second child. She tried to make a reduced-hour schedule work at a different firm, but said she struggled.

“I was looking at leaving the career for awhile because I didn’t know if it was doable,” Garza said. “I didn’t want to have periods where I’m working 80 hours

a week. That’s when I talked to Mike [Brem].”

Several of the firm’s part-time associates said one major problem with such programs at many other firms is the phenomenon of so-called “hours creep.” For example, part-time attorneys may receive 75% of their salary to work 75% of their normal hours. Inevitably, a large project will require working more than the stipulated hours, or attorneys may feel pressure to work more hours to justify their position to the firm. However, they aren’t compensated for the additional work, which can lead to frustration or resentment.

To avoid hours creep, Schirrmeyer Diaz-Arrastia Brem pays its part-time associates by the hour — which both Brem and the associates say has worked. The associates work as many hours as they want in a given week, without the pressure to reach a specific number. The firm also allows associates to structure their own workweek and permits them to work from home. The firm pays only for the amount of work that they perform.

“The problem with [most part-time programs at law firms] is that you take a \$100,000 pay cut to leave at 4 p.m. instead

of 7 p.m.,” Garza said. “If I have a busy period, I get paid for it.”

Deborah Epstein Henry, the president of consulting firm Flex-Time Lawyers, said statistics from the National Association for Law Placement show that roughly the same percentage of attorneys at both large and small firms work part-time. But a marked difference is how firms execute their part-time programs, she said.

“The small-firm environment tends to give more flexibility to how they work — as far as working from home or leaving early. There is a lot more pressure for face-time at large firms,” she said.

Schirrmeyer associate Tonya Rodriguez doesn’t worry about face time much anymore. The mother of two and former associate at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld typically bills between 20 and 30 hours a week, much of it from home. She primarily writes motions — a focus that allows her to write and research when her schedule allows.

“I think there is a perception that, if you aren’t willing to work crazy hours, you’re not a good attorney,” Rodriguez said. “I don’t think that’s true.”

3Ls Do the Grim Math on Job Market

National Law Journal

Leigh Jones / Associate editor

April 20, 2009

The nation’s 200 accredited law schools will spit out about 43,000 graduates next month, with roughly half of those lawyer-hopefuls expecting to take jobs in private practice.

They will be entering an employment market that already is swarming with thousands of laid-off associates who are in about as much demand as a five-year lease on a full-size Hummer.

The upshot is a massive pile-up of attorneys looking for work in an environment that is pitting would-be attorneys against more experienced competitors.

“Given that a lot of people who have been laid off were younger associates, there’s a lot of uncertainty,” said Shilpi Agarwal, a third-year student at Columbia

Law School. “People are pretty nervous across the board.”

Agarwal, who will start clerking in federal district court in Houston after graduation, has accepted a job following her clerkship at one of the nation’s largest law firms. Like many others, it has deferred start dates for new associates until December. Agarwal was relieved that she chose to clerk for at least a year, given the circumstances, she said.

Among the 43,518 law students who graduated in 2008, about 21,000 took jobs at private law firms, according to the latest information available from the American Bar Association and the National Association for Law Placement (NALP). About the same number of people are expected to

graduate this year.

A big question mark

Historically, nearly two-thirds of law school graduates have jobs lined up before they get their diplomas, said James Leopold, executive director of NALP.

But a big question mark hovers above the class of 2009. Many, like Agarwal, have accepted positions at firms that have delayed associate start dates for six months or even a year. Others accepted offers only to have them rescinded. But many more third-year students, especially at nonelite schools, are uncertain about where they’ll go.

Moreover, they fear that those with

3Ls Do the Grim Math on Job Market

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more experience may snag the scant few jobs that are available now and the other slots that will open up once the economy brightens.

“Everything kind of sucks,” said William Leef, a third-year student at Seton Hall University School of Law.

Leef worked in the Hackensack, N.J., office of an 80-attorney law firm after his first year of law school. He went back to the firm after his second year and had anticipated a full-time job following graduation. The firm notified him in December that he would not get an offer.

He already has accepted that he likely won't get a job until after he takes the bar exam this summer, and he's wary about the competition he'll face from licensed attorneys who already have experience as associates but have been laid off.

Leef said that the best argument he could make to a potential employer for hiring a recent graduate rather than an associate with experience is that those fresh from law school have a clean slate.

“I guess you could say that they can mold you into their style of work,” he said.

Leef had envisioned working in a health care practice at a private law firm, which was what prompted him to attend Seton Hall, which has a strong health law program, he said. But now? “I'm looking for anything and everything,” he said.

Although experienced associates have the upper hand from the perspective of graduating students, those who are already

in the trenches have their own share of anxiety.

Jessie Pinkrah lost her job when Thacher Proffitt & Wood moved to dissolve last year. A 2008 graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, she had four months of experience before she was let go.

“I don't fit into the ‘experienced attorney’ category, but with the class of 2009 entering the playing field, I'm not considered a recent law graduate, either,” Pinkrah said. “It's just more competition for jobs that we had very little chance of getting to begin with.”

In general, experience outweighs the blank slate, said the editor of Hiring Partner Office, an anonymously written blog created by the hiring partner of a large firm.

“But if we are talking just a few months, I am not sure that is going to make or break things,” said the blogger.

More competition

In the past 12 months, major U.S. law firms have sent packing about 4,000 attorneys, according to LawShucks.com, a law firm layoff tracker. And for every 100 disclosed layoffs, an equal number of unreported layoffs occur, said a hiring partner at a major law firm.

If accurate, it means that about 8,000 attorneys, the majority from the junior associate ranks, or about 38% of the usual

21,000 graduates who take private firm jobs each year, will be fighting for any available spots. Whatever the math, it is clear that there are far more people looking for work than positions available.

The odds that job-hunters face may be daunting, but a panicked applicant is a turnoff to employers, said Dana Morris, assistant dean for career development at University of Maryland School of Law.

“No one wants to hire someone who's desperate,” Morris said. “They need to take the time to stop and take a deep breath.” Morris said third-year law students “absolutely” are concerned about the competition they face from laid-off attorneys scrambling for jobs, and she advises them “to look beyond the hype out there,” she said.

Morris is urging students who had their hopes set on big city, big-firm practice to consider smaller shops in secondary markets.

Although a candidate with experience generally is more attractive to law firms than those without, Leipold of NALP said that sweeping conclusions about who is better positioned are difficult to draw.

“The two groups of people are competing with each other, but [within each] there are different groups of people with different skills sets,” he said, adding, “Law firms hire in a stratified way.”

Office Etiquette Essentials

Deborah Schneider

Did you hear about the summer associate who had too much to drink and threw up on a partner at his firm's social event? How about the summer associate who got so drunk at her firm's party that she stripped off all her clothes, jumped into the Hudson River, and had to get fished out by the Coast Guard?

Such dramatic faux pas don't happen every day. Still, law school career counselors and law firm personnel report that law students and new lawyers routinely make etiquette missteps during their job searches and at the office. At best, poor job search or workplace etiquette can tarnish your professional reputation. At worst, it could cost you your job or a job offer.

"Today's law students need to mesh their more casual work style with that of older generations of lawyers who are accustomed to a more formal approach," says Sharon Abrahams, director of professional development at McDermott Will & Emery. Abrahams, who works out of the firm's Miami office, teaches etiquette seminars for law students and lawyers across the country.

So, rather than taking behavior cues from *The Apprentice* contestants, or even from your classmates, use the following dos and don'ts to help guide you as you navigate the law firm environment.

Don't (always) tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth

Of course you should be honest and trustworthy with future and current employers, but being too candid, especially in a job interview, can create etiquette issues.

"Sometimes when students are too brutally honest, they come off as lacking focus and credibility," says Kathy Morris, chief career development officer of Chicago-based Gardner Carton & Douglas.

"For example, some students will come right out in an interview and say that they want to work at a law firm solely as a means to pay off their debt," Morris says. "Or that it makes no difference which firm they work at. That's not what firms want to hear. They want you to research the firm and articulate why you are a good match for them."

While avoiding full disclosure is sometimes appropriate, you don't want to be untruthful, either.

"Don't claim you have a particular interest, like baseball, for example, when you can't even name who's in the World Series," Morris adds. "It's a problem if you're not being genuine, in a job interview or at any other time."

The key, she advises, is telling the truth, blended with advocacy. "Be yourself, but be your best self."

Don't party like a rock star

"Many workplace etiquette faux pas relate to a summer or young associate's over-consumption of alcohol," says Dan White, an associate at Bryan Cave in St. Louis.

Throwing back one too many at a work-related function presents a double whammy—getting drunk is a faux pas in and of itself, and it often leads to more inappropriate behavior, like telling bad jokes, presenting yourself poorly, or making a fool of yourself.

Fortunately, it's easy to sidestep this common blunder.

"The key is to understand that [law firm] social events are not social events; they are work events," says one associate at a large New York law firm. "It may look and feel like a party atmosphere because there's a lot of free alcohol. But the reality is, you are not at a party."

White agrees with the party-as-work theme. "If you're having a cocktail with another lawyer, a fellow intern, or a client, consider it a work meeting," he advises.

Abrahams offers a simple guideline: "Have a drink. Maybe two. Then stop. Or don't drink at all."

Don't eat all you can eat

Here's food for thought: A lot of etiquette problems occur at meals, whether it's an interview lunch or a work-related event.

According to Abrahams, one of the most common missteps is ordering the largest or most expensive item on the menu.

"At an interview or business meal, don't order too much food, like the 32-ounce steak, and don't order the priciest item, like the lobster, unless everyone

else is," she cautions. "Excessive ordering makes you appear gluttonous, which reflects negatively on you. Stick with ordering something middle of the road."

Food faux pas can occur back in the office as well. For example, Abrahams recalls several situations where a law firm ordered in lunch. "I've seen summer interns and new associates take three halves of a sandwich and not even eat all of them," she recalls. "Then the sandwiches run out before everyone gets lunch, so not only have the interns or associates wasted food, but they have taken it away from someone else."

During workplace lunches, use common sense and common courtesy. Just take one sandwich or slice of pizza and wait for everyone to get their share before going back for seconds.

Do be clothes minded

Although the dress code in some legal offices has gotten more casual, it can still be a bad idea to dress too casually, either for your job interview or when reporting to work.

Even if your office has casual days, that still means not wearing flip-flops and keeping more formal clothes on hand for unexpected meetings or events.

Abrahams advocates dressing more formally at all times.

"If you dress too casually—say, a polo shirt or a sweater—you risk being mistaken for someone other than a lawyer," she says. "When you dress more formally, you behave more formally. You'll present better and display a greater degree of professionalism if you're wearing a suit than if you're wearing khakis."

Still not sure what to wear to work? "Take your wardrobe cues from other respected attorneys and dress for the job you want," Abrahams says. "It doesn't even have to cost a lot of money if you go to discount stores."

Among women, a less common but equally serious clothing faux pas is dressing too suggestively, either at the office or at after-work functions, notes Kari Glover, managing partner at Preston Gates & Ellis in Seattle.

One particular "wardrobe malfunction" stands out in her mind. "One interviewee wore an elegant skirt to a hiring

Office Etiquette Essentials

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dinner,” she recalls. “The skirt buttoned up the back and persisted in coming unbuttoned further and further without attracting her notice. By the end of the evening, I was consciously walking and standing between her and the more senior male partners at the dinner.”

Do mind your manners

One of the most commonly reported offenses of young lawyers is treating support staff disrespectfully. Treating staff with the utmost respect is not only the right thing to do, but it also can make your work life a lot easier.

“You need the staff’s support for everything from finding office supplies to filing court documents,” notes Lisa Dickinson, director of career planning at the University of San Francisco School of Law. “If you treat them well, they will look out for you and offer extra help and insider information.”

Conversely, if you develop a reputation as someone who is difficult to work with, your work might end up at the bottom of the pile.

One lawyer at a Washington-based government agency points out that support staff may be called on to help evaluate your job performance.

“As part of my evaluation, the firm I worked for as a summer associate asked my assistant what she thought of me,” he says. “I hadn’t expected that and was doubly thankful I had always treated my assistant with respect and collegiality.”

Of course, it’s not just support staff you should treat respectfully. It’s everyone.

“Use basic politeness,” Abrahams says. “Say ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’ Hold doors for people. Try it and see what a big difference it makes in how people relate to you. You’ll get more with honey than with vinegar.”

Another important way to show respect for your colleagues is respecting their time.

“Don’t be late,” notes White, “either to a meeting or with a promised item. Lack of punctuality is a sign of rudeness that tells others that you think your time is more important than theirs. If you know

you will be late, give as much advance notice as possible. And if you are late despite your best efforts, don’t interrupt the meeting when you enter. Apologize to the meeting organizer and don’t do it again.”

Do exercise caution with e-mail and voice mail

“Office technology offers plenty of chances to embarrass yourself,” notes one associate at a large New York firm. “That’s why it’s critical to pay attention when you’re being shown how to use your office e-mail and voice mail systems.”

To help prevent committing the most common, and humbling, technological faux pas, here are some guidelines gleaned from interviews for this article:

Treat e-mail like a letter or memo. “Realize that what you send will likely be forwarded to others or become a permanent item in the client’s file,” White says.

Spell check, grammar check, and review all e-mails before sending them.

Make the subject line as informative as possible. “Old message headers are often used to find information months or years later, and going through 20 e-mails from one person where the subject line is only the client or project name wastes time that you could have avoided,” White adds.

Organize your thoughts, be succinct, and use line breaks liberally. Format your e-mail so that it scans well, particularly on a Blackberry. If what you have to say requires more than a few paragraphs, write a memo.

Don’t send snippy or derogatory e-mails, and don’t send e-mails when you’re upset. Don’t type in all caps, either, as that’s considered “yelling.”

Don’t put anything in writing that you wouldn’t want to see published in a newspaper. “The wrong e-mail can easily get forwarded around the country,” Abrahams warns. “Before you send a message, always ask yourself: ‘What if this got forwarded to my boss?’”

Always check the “To:” line before sending an e-mail. Check the “Cc:” and “Bcc:” lines as well to make sure you are copying the appropriate individuals.

Don’t let your e-mail address book automatically fill in a recipient’s name

based on typing in the first few letters of the address. “You can easily think you just sent a message to a classmate about last week’s party and then realize that a partner’s name that begins with the same letter was automatically filled into the ‘To:’ line instead,” Dickinson says.

Unless you’ve specifically been directed, do not use any pre-established e-mail mailing lists (office-wide, firm-wide, group-wide, or otherwise). “While it may be nice that you brought homemade carrot cake to the office to share with your co-workers, it’s unlikely that the entire firm is interested in a slice, or even in the same time zone to partake,” White points out.

Many of these same principles—and simply exercising good judgment—can keep you out of trouble with voice mail, too.

For example, don’t leave a voice mail you wouldn’t want forwarded around your office, or the nation.

“Make your message brief, make it to the point, and, if you plan on taking more than 60 seconds, send an e-mail,” White recommends. “If you really need to leave a voice mail that’s longer than one minute, warn the listener at the beginning of the message.”

Do watch your mouth

Despite the saying “actions speak louder than words,” your words can speak volumes about you. That’s why it’s so important to be mindful of what you say and how you say it, when you’re looking for a job and when you’re on the job.

When it comes to the manner in which you express yourself, a common misstep is using language that’s, like, too casual.

“The most common workplace etiquette faux pas I’ve observed among law student interns is using the word ‘like’ and other slang words too often,” says Karen Doran, an associate at Maduff, Medina & Maduff in Chicago. “When law clerks sound more like high school students than burgeoning attorneys, it is difficult for me to take them, and their work, seriously.”

How to improve your language? Doran suggests reading classic books, newspapers like *The New York Times*, and magazines such as *The New Yorker* and

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The Economist.

As for what you say, make sure you think before you speak.

“Even if your office atmosphere is congenial and informal, do not ever make jokes or comments that could be perceived as offensive or inappropriate,” says Ellen Fred, an associate at Coblenz, Patch, Duffy & Bass in San Francisco. “You’re still in a professional setting and should conform your behavior accordingly. Inappropriate comments tend to stick in people’s memories.”

That’s certainly the case with Glover. “In one instance,” she recalls, “I was in a cab with three summer associates who began discussing in explicit detail the sex one of them had with a pick-up date the night before.”

Do recover gracefully

According to Morris, Abrahams, and Dickinson, overcoming an etiquette slip-up is a four-step process:

Address the issue directly and don’t ignore it or try to cover it up.

Apologize to the appropriate individual(s) and acknowledge that you made a mistake.

Make any necessary amends or take any action needed to remedy the situation.

Learn from your mistake and don’t repeat it again.

So, for example, if you are disrespectful to your assistant, apologize and do something nice for him or her (like bringing flowers or sweets) and don’t behave rudely ever again.

Don’t beat yourself up too much, either.

“If you’re not sure how to handle a particular situation, seek advice from a trusted colleague,” Morris advises. “Most importantly, keep your head up, own up to your behavior, and act like a professional. The best lawyers and law students can deal with the hardest aspects of communication.”

Doran agrees. “A law clerk who recognizes the problem and takes responsibility to actively remedy it goes a long way in my mind to becoming a clerk I can trust.”

Workplace Etiquette Resources

Where can you get further guidance on the etiquette that’s appropriate for your workplace? The best starting point

is to ask a colleague, whether it’s the person in charge of hiring or professional development, or another lawyer you trust and respect. You can also ask for pointers, handouts, and other resources from your law school career services counselors (remember, their offices are open all summer). In addition, the following books are worth reading for helpful workplace etiquette advice:

- *What Law School Doesn’t Teach You: But You Really Need to Know*, by Kimm Alayne Walton
- *Full Disclosure: The New Lawyer’s Must-Read Career Guide*, by Christen Civileto Carey
- *Business Etiquette for Dummies*, by Sue Fox
- *Emily Post’s The Etiquette Advantage in Business: Personal Skills for Professional Success* (2nd edition), by Peggy Post and Peter Post
- *Business Class: Etiquette Essentials for Success at Work*, by Jacqueline Whitmore
- *Making Partner: A Guide for Law Firm Associates* (2nd edition), by John R. Sapp (available at www.ababooks.org)