



MAPLA Briefs

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF PRE-LAW ADVISORS

www.mapla.org

Fall 2008

From the Desk of the President

Mac Francis, Indiana University—Blomington



Greetings!

I hope that the fall semester is going well for all of you—even though many folks report that things are busier than ever at their institutions. It is an understatement to say that it is a huge honor for me to take over the office of President of MAPLA. Pam Allen has done an incredible job. She has devoted countless extra hours, week after week, month after month, to make MAPLA a better organization. She also was a major force, if not the major force, behind the success of the wonderful PLANC Conference in Las Vegas, which took place

October 15-18. I hope that I will be able to fulfill my duties with even a portion of her ability and dedication. She will be sorely missed!

On the last day of the PLANC Conference, MAPLA held elections for President-Elect and for three at-large positions. Gwyn Wallander, of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, (our current Secretary), emerged as President-Elect in a very close election. Don Racheter, of Iowa Wesleyan University, was elected for a one year Member-At-Large position; Yvette Simpson, of Miami University of Ohio, was elected for a two year Member-At-Large position; and John Little, our current Web-Master from the University of Iowa was re-elected to the Board. We welcome these new Board members and look forward to another productive year with their help. Denise Gabrelski, of the University of Cincinnati, and outgoing Board member in charge of Membership, has most generously agreed to continue to coordinate the compilation of *MAPLA Profiles*, allowing a new Board member to manage memberships. We thank Denise for all of her hard work and detailed attention to membership duties for the past several years.

Joining the MAPLA Board four years ago, I was surprised at the amount of hard work each member does. It is a time-consuming, at times frustrating, but always ultimately rewarding venture. I'm sure I speak for each MAPLA member when I thank all Board members for all that they do to make this organization work so well. I'd also like to thank past Board members for their service.

As you probably know, because of the PLANC conference this fall MAPLA will not be holding an annual conference this year. However, the Board will begin making plans for our next conference, to be held in the fall of 2009. We would appreciate any suggestions for any aspect of the upcoming event. If you have any questions or concerns about MAPLA, please do not hesitate to contact me at rgfranci@indiana.edu.

I hope all who attended enjoyed the PLANC Conference, and I look forward to another great year for MAPLA. Thank you!!

Best wishes,
Mac Francis

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Wrapping Up Another Successful MAPLA Caravan

Mac Francis, Indiana University—Bloomington



Normally, MAPLA hosts the fall Caravan during the week following the Chicago Forum, to take advantage of the presence of so many law school representatives in the Midwest. Unfortunately, this year this was not an option because the PLANC Conference was scheduled for that week. Therefore, we elected to use the week prior to the Chicago Forum and hope for the best.

This year, the Caravan began in the south at Indiana University on Monday, October 6, and worked its way gradually north towards Chicago through stops at Washington University in St. Louis (only its second appearance on the tour—its first was two years ago) on Tuesday, University of Illinois on Wednesday, and the University of Wisconsin on Thursday, October 9.

Registrations came in a bit slower than usual (perhaps due to the fact that many institutions started classes a bit later this fall). Many law schools reported lower travel budgets this year, and several said they were considering uses of their funds for more targeted admission efforts than attendance at traditional “Law School Fairs.” In short, we were initially concerned about law school attendance for the Caravan. However, in the end, we received one of the highest number of registrations ever.

One hundred twenty-one law schools registered for at least one stop on the

Caravan. One hundred seven registered for Indiana, 102 for Washington University, 105 for Illinois, and 106 for Wisconsin. I believe this is the first year that over 100 law schools registered for every stop on the Caravan. This is especially noteworthy for Wash U, which received only 88 registrations in its 2006 debut. That makes a grand total of 420 individual law school stops for the Caravan as a whole. It is a tremendous administrative challenge to keep track of, coordinate, and manage such a large number of multiple appearances! But the site coordinators handled it all with good cheer and a spirit of true collegiality and professionalism.

One of the reasons so many law schools keep coming to the Midwest is their ability to meet with a large number of students at each stop—not only from the host institution, but from regional colleges as well. This year Indiana had a student attendance of 643, which included students from 14 additional regional institutions. Wash U had 250 students (unfortunately there was heavy rain during their event, which undoubtedly affected attendance), which included 13 additional institutions; Illinois had 294 (their event was in a less convenient venue due to renovations in their traditional site) with at least 3 additional institutions represented; and Wisconsin had an attendance of 422 (this was estimated to be about 10% lower than expected because it unfortunately coincided with Yom Kippur—for a projected equivalent attendance somewhere in the

neighborhood of 464).

The tremendous success of the Caravan year after year depends upon so many people from many institutions independently doing an awful lot of work, and having it all come together in the end. It is a tremendous effort, with massive materials pre-shipped to each site, and unexpected surprises awaiting at every turn—from incorrect table set-ups, to no-show schools, to unregistered schools suddenly appearing and expecting a table, to catering problems, publicity glitches, missing materials, you name it. The individual site-coordinators put it all together and make it happen. This work is above and beyond their already busy schedules and duties. They do it for the benefit of their students, institutions, and MAPLA. We all owe them an incredible THANK YOU!

All sites have hard-working support staff too numerous for me to mention—and I wouldn’t want to leave anyone out. Without them the Caravan would not function. So, as representatives of the entire ensemble of helpers, please allow me to single out the site coordinators for each campus. These were: Janine Bullerduck at Indiana, our trusty Office Manager who did by far the bulk of the work here; Kirsten Smith at Wash U; Julie Thomas at Illinois (the first year in memory Steve Shafer was not in charge); and Consuelo Lopez-Springfield at my alma mater in Madison, Wisconsin. Thanks to all for another successful MAPLA Caravan!

Membership News

Denise Gabrelski
University of Cincinnati



secured through that registration process. Law school members are not recruited at that time. We currently have 48 pre-law members, and a law school membership drive is planned.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Membership Chair for the past four years. I have thoroughly enjoyed being on the MAPLA Board and interacting with many of you along the way.

If you did not attend PLANC and wish to renew your MAPLA membership, please contact Yvette Simpson at simpsoyr@muohio.edu.

As the outgoing Membership Chair, I would like to welcome Yvette Simpson from Miami University in Ohio as the new Membership Chair. Thank you, Yvette, for agreeing to take on this important role.

Because the PLANC conference was held this year, pre-law membership to MAPLA was

LSAC Update

Anne Brandt, Executive Director for Education, Prelaw Programs, and Member Support Services



The topics of the LSAC update at PLANC included the Prelaw Advisor Website, Forums, LSAC technology projects, the new online website for applicants to be launched in Spring 2009, LSAT accommodations,

test date changes, and the new Department of Education requirements on reporting the race/ethnicity of law students.

The Prelaw Advisors Website was launched in March and is the central source of advisors' information from LSAC and for applicants to law school. Access requires a username and password and the sole/coordinating advisor at each school must grant access to any supporting advisors. Prelaw advisor action reports and LSAT score reports are now available only online and five years of data for the school will be displayed. All advisors with access to the reports must sign an online confidentiality agreement annually in order to have access to the data. Advisors will find links to LSAC services and publications, PLANC and all of the APLAs, the prelaw advisor and admission director directories which are searchable, links to law schools, demos and tutorials, and the national recruitment calendar.

Beginning in the spring LSAC will provide a new design to the website where candidates research law schools and the legal profession, learn about the LSAT and financing a legal education, and, most importantly, apply for admission. The website will be more intuitive and is designed to respond quickly to a candidate's desire to take some action--register for the LSAT, apply to a law school, attend a forum, etc. The application process will be streamlined by displaying the requirements for each school and whether the applicant has completed all elements of an application. Many more features should respond to the candidate's need for quick information and ready access to their application information.

LSAC is sponsoring three 2009 forums in February/March—Houston, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The Recruitment Calendar Committee has been reconstituted to work on coordinating recruiting events within APLA regions in order to maximize law school participation in light of budget constraints and increases in travel costs. One prelaw advisor and one law school representative from each APLA region are on the committee.

The enhancement to the Commitment Overlap Report provided to law schools that contained the names of those applicants holding multiple deposits began on June 15. That date was selected in order

to be sure that applicants knew their admission and financial aid options and could be expected to select from among those options. If those holding multiple deposits select one school earlier in the process, then law schools could inform members of their waiting lists earlier in the summer of available seats and redistribute scholarship aid.

The number of persons taking the LSAT was up nearly 15% in June and approximately 4% in October.

The LSAC Test Accommodations Work Group has implemented a series of recommendations to better inform testers seeking accommodations and advisors who assist them. A brochure describing the process and its requirements and deadlines is now available to advisors, applicants, and law schools. LSAC hired an additional professional to review accommodations requests and is offering greater specificity about why an accommodation is not granted. All candidates who request accommodations are surveyed about the process so that services can be improved.

LSAC is preparing to assist law schools in reporting the new Department of Education racial/ethnic categories which will be required in 2010. Longitudinal data may be affected by these changes.



Reflections from MAPLA's Past President

Pamela Allen, Denison University

Greetings! I hope you were able to attend the PLANC Conference in Las Vegas, October 15-18th, 2008. Over 430 pre-law and law school representatives were in attendance; great networking and workshops were conducted and over 45 MAPLA members were in attendance! A warm welcome to all new MAPLA members too!

I have enjoyed serving on the MAPLA Board as president and as a representative to PLANC and will miss all of the board members. I know they will continue working hard on behalf of the MAPLA membership and their efforts are most appreciated! Many, many thanks to Ava Preacher for her years of service in producing the MAPLA Profiles (which will now be taken over by outgoing Membership Chair, Denise Gabrelski)! Mac Francis will continue to coordinate the Caravan and will no doubt bring great leadership to MAPLA in his role as President.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the MAPLA Conference at the Doubletree Hotel Chicago Magnificent Mile (formerly Chicago City Centre Hotel), October 15-17, 2009 which will again be held in conjunction with the LSAC Chicago Law Forum. Mark your calendars now!

Best wishes to all of you,
Pamela Allen, MAPLA Past President

The Personal Statement: One Person's View of the View

Collins Byrd, Assistant Dean of Admissions, University of Iowa College of Law



The Personal Statement is the second-most important document in an application. The most important document is the LSDAS Report, which has the LSAT score, the GPA, the transcripts

and the Letters of Recommendation. The Personal Statement, though, is the next most important document in the application for admission.

The Personal Statement is the only place in the application with which an applicant can tell me what she really wants me to know about her. Consider the application process, for a moment: The LSAT is a reflection of the applicant based on a standardized test that was created in 1947. The GPA is a reflection of the applicant based on undergraduate work that has been done over a period of time, for approximately 30-35 different professors, at one of over 3,300 undergraduate institutions in this country, that offer a bachelor's degree. The Letters of Recommendation are reflections of the applicant based on the views and angles of the writers of the letter. The Personal Statement, however, is the only place where an applicant can tell us what she really thinks we need to know about her, and coming to us in an unfiltered, straightforward way. So, the Personal Statement is very important.

“Make sure the Personal Statement reflects what the applicant really wants us to know about him or her.”

My recommendation on writing a Personal Statement is to follow the guidelines of length and style that are set by the schools to which you are applying. For example: The University of Iowa College of Law recommends that a Personal Statement be one to three pages in length, double-spaced. We will not

frown upon Personal Statements that are longer, or single spaced, as long as the additional information does not repeat what has already been said in an earlier part of the Personal Statement. Some schools have longer or shorter length requirements; some schools have specific questions and essay topics that need to be addressed. The best guideline is to follow the guideline that is explained in the individual application for each school.

To emphasize the point again: Make sure the Personal Statement reflects what the applicant really wants us to know about him or her. The applicant needs to consider the following statement: ‘If the Admissions Committee forgets everything there is to know about me, it will not forget the following things: Point A, Point B, Point C...’ Then, the Personal Statement needs to tell us why Point A is important, how it was developed to become a strength or key part of an applicant, and how it will assist the applicant in being a better lawyer, attorney, law school student, citizen, etc. Then, Point B needs to be addressed: Why Point B is important, how it was developed to be a strength or key part of an applicant, and how it will assist the applicant in being a better lawyer, attorney, law school student, citizen, etc. Then, move to Point C, and go through the same thought process that was previously outlined. For each strength or important point, the applicant needs to be sure that it is an issue that will not be reflected in the undergraduate GPA or the Law School Admission Test score.

One quick point needs to be made about the use of the Personal Statement, versus an addendum to the Personal Statement: The Personal Statement should be used to assist the Admissions Committee in describing what a person's motivations are for attending law school. An addendum to the Personal Statement should be used to discuss specific and unique problems that the applicant has had to overcome in his or her life, to explain an

LSAT score or undergraduate GPA that might be abnormally low or high, or to describe irregularities in a person's academic, extracurricular or personal background which are important for the Admissions Committee to be aware of.

“Write [the personal statement] as accurately as you can, and with complete honesty and sincerity.”

In closing: I recently traveled to Atlanta, GA to attend the LSAC Atlanta Law School Forum. A prospective applicant approached our table and proceeded to ask me a few questions. One of the questions/comments she voiced was, ‘I grew up in a small Southern town; and I do not have the glamorous background that some fellow prospects have, who grew up in large cities, or the East Coast or West Coast. How can my Personal Statement, consisting of a modest background and all, stand out in a competitive crowd?’ I responded by saying, ‘The Personal Statement is a Personal Statement, with an emphasis on ‘PERSONAL.’’ Do not worry about how the Personal Statement looks in relation to other people's statements or backgrounds. It should reflect the essence of why you want to earn a law degree. Write it as accurately as you can, and with complete honesty and sincerity. Make it say the things you really want Admissions Committees to know about you, and you alone. When reading Personal Statements, we are not interested in your record juxtaposed to someone else or something else. After all, you are developing your professional life for you, not for someone else. If your record stands out from the pack, fine. If not, well that's the way it goes sometimes. The admissions professionals will make that judgment. The applicant needs to make sure that the Personal Statement reflects the applicant's deep inner passions for wanting to earn a law degree.

On Campus Interviews: Two Perspectives



Lindsay Hughes
2L, Drake University

Every law student remembers the days of studying for and taking the LSAT. The process of interviewing for a summer associate position is much the same. To give you an idea of the similarity, just as the LSAT determines the school, if any, you will get into, summer associate positions often lead to full time associate offers. So, the LSAT gets you into law school and summer associate positions get you a job. Remember how long and drawn out the LSAT process was? Multiple that by 10 and that describes the On Campus Interview (OCI) process.

OCI is not without stress, confusion, and to some like myself, even panic. Not unlike the LSAT, OCI requires preparation. The first step to obtaining the elusive summer associate position is simply to get the interview. In this first stage, all you can do is send potential employers a resume. The preparation for legal interviewing begins on the first day of law school. Devoting myself to law school and working hard through the first year allowed me to distinguish myself from my classmates on paper by highlighting my extracurricular activities and decent class rank. After sending resumes to the firms I was interested in, I waited for what seemed like weeks, while the firms sorted through all the resumes that they received and selected a small number for first round interviews.

The second step in the process is the first round interview. This usually takes place on campus and lasts between ten and twenty minutes. Unfortunately, I cannot offer the magical keys to a successful first interview but I can provide some helpful hints. Every first round interview that I took part in began the same way. I was called into the room, I introduced myself, and then I was asked to sit down. As I sat there waiting for the questions to begin I could feel my palms getting sweatier. Then, the first question, "What questions do you have for us?" And thus it began, the legal interview. In a legal interview, as opposed to other types of interviews, you as the interviewee are expected to carry the interview.

My first helpful tip is to research. Law firms expect that you have researched their firms and have decided that what they have to offer is what you want. When they ask you what question you have, they want to see that you have done your research. Once you get this question, this is your chance to impress them. I have learned that the best questions to ask ties in the expertise of the firm, strengths of your own, and somehow ends in a question. For example, when interviewing with a big transactional firm, a great question might be: "I understand that



Samuel Esan
2L, University of Illinois

The first thing I would tell anyone preparing for the On-Campus Interviewing ("OCI") process is to have a plan. It sounds like common sense, but after dealing with your first year of law school, most people are mentally exhausted. Add to that, write-on competition for journals, clerking or summer associate- ships, and your brain just really wants to switch-off. At Illinois, 1-Ls have the opportunity to go through spring OCI, for me that process really helped prepare me for the main OCI that takes place in the fall of 2-L year. I also made sure to talk to as many rising 3-Ls and recent graduates that were willing to detail their process for me. Their insights into how to get ready for the OCI process proved invaluable.

I will now attempt to give a step by step narrative of the OCI process for me. This is absolutely not all-encompassing, and will not work for everyone. Other factors to consider when going into the OCI process include where you rank in your class, your overall GPA, and whether or not you have any work experience, but this information will give a general idea of what it takes to get through OCI. I will be referring to law firms in my examples, but this advice can also be related to all other kinds of legal employment.

My first nugget of information is "speak to as many knowledgeable people as possible." After the NALP blackout period for 1-Ls had passed I spent some time with my career services professionals. I just wanted to get an understanding of what it would take to get a job during the OCI process. After speaking with career services, I spent the rest of my first semester studying and trying to get the best grades that I could. In my second semester, I spoke with a lot of practicing attorneys, career services, and alumni. The idea was to have as much background information as possible on what it takes to secure an offer during the OCI process.

Practice Runs. If your law school career services department has mock interviews I would strongly suggest that you participate. The interview process is challenging and you only get one chance to make a first impression, so any relevant experience you get will be helpful. At Illinois we had both general seminars on interviewing, as well as mock interviews. I cannot overstate how important these sessions were in learning what legal interviews entail. These sessions included the basics, such as, how to handle questions about previous experience, the behavioral interview processes, demeanor and body language during the interview, and how to address questions on grades (both good and bad). They also help to give you a level of

On Campus Interviews

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you do a lot of transitional work which really interests me as I did very well in contracts, however, I also consider one of my strengths to be my people skills. How often do you work with clients in a transactional role?" And wa-la, your great question has gotten you a second interview.

In the third step to clinching a summer associate position, firms will call back three to five people for in-firm interviews. This interview is where hiring decisions are made. In-firm interviews are much longer, involve many more people, and are much more fun. For example, my first in-firm interview lasted from 9:00am to 1:30pm and I met with 12 attorneys. The most helpful tip I

can give for in-firm interviews is to simply remember that just as much as you are being judged, you are judging the firm. Really open up with the attorneys that you meet with. Give them an idea of what you want to do and try to get an idea of what they do. Let them know what you want out of a summer associate position. In addition to getting to know each attorney individually, I recommend having one standard question that you ask everyone. The variety of answers you get will tell you a lot about the firm. My standard question involved the comfort of going to another attorney for ideas and suggestions. Attorneys are surprisingly honest so use them to get a feel for the firm. In-firm interviews also usually end with lunch where you are often paired with several of the younger attorneys. Lunch is the best opportunity

to get a feel for how the attorneys at the firm interact with each other as it is usually the only time that you will be with more than one attorney. Pay attention to this as the atmosphere at the firm can make or break your summer experience. Once lunch is over, you wait.

Much like waiting for my LSAT score, after the second interviews I checked my mail constantly. Yes, I got my fair share of rejection letters, but I also got some offers. And at the end of the day, all it takes is one. Legal interviewing is pretty cut and dry: put together a strong resume, master art of complimenting the firm and yourself in a first interview, be yourself during the in-firm interview, then wait and hope for the best.

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comfort going into the real interviews, since you have some idea of what to expect.

Next, do as much research as you can on cities where you want to work, practice areas, and firms that interest you. For those who know exactly what area of the law they want to work in, they should look for firms that specialize in that area, and research them as much as possible. Suggestions for researching a firm include going to their website, researching their NALP page, networking with alumni, and using Westlaw or LexisNexis to see what kind of cases their attorneys are working on. For those who are not yet sure what area of the law they are interested in, I would suggest starting with the locations they may be interested in.

After researching the locations, talk to upper classmen, professors, and alumni you know in those areas, and use the internet to learn about the law firms that operate in the cities. Once you have an idea about a firm's reputation, professional development, practice areas, his-

tory, and clients they serve you can then narrow your list to those that best fit your interests. Once you have a list of target firms, the next step is to bid on them at your school's OCI and hope that you get them. At Illinois, there is a bidding process whereby students place bids on the firms they want to interview with based on a ranking order.

"While it is completely understandable that some people will be more reserved when they meet their interviewer, you must be as personable and professional as possible."

Once you have the list of firms that you will actually be interviewing with, the process begins in earnest. The first thing I did was to go back to my initial research and make sure I knew the firms extremely well. This included knowing their specializations (especially those they are best known for), their clients, their general reputation in the marketplace, size, locations, and any other information that lets an interviewer know you are genuinely interested in that firm.

If the school provides the name of your interviewer, do specific research on them as well. While this information is not always available, when it is, I would suggest knowing what law school the interviewer went to, the area of law they practice in, and any commonalities you may have with the interviewer.

This information will be very helpful during the interview. While some interviewers will stick to what I call the "interview script," others are more conversational, and knowing something about them gives you specific questions that you can ask, without resorting to generic questions. A big rapport killer during an interview is a lull in the conversation, and the worst thing anyone can do when an interviewer asks if you have any questions about the firm, is for you to say no. In my opinion, saying you have no questions shows a lack of interest in the firm. Having some questions memorized (and if possible tailored to the individual) keeps the conversation going, and in my experience, that was always a good sign.

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Law School Q&A: University of Minnesota Law School

Julie Tigges, Director of Admissions, University of Minnesota

www.law.umn.edu



For over 100 years, the University of Minnesota Law School has been a pioneer in legal education and research. As a top public law school in a vibrant, urban setting, we offer students access to a world-class faculty, an innovative curriculum, unmatched clinical practice opportunities, and a network of dedicated alumni around the world.

Q: If you could describe your law school in a few words or a sentence what would you say? Please give us the reasoning behind that choice.

I would be remiss if I didn't answer with our tagline: Rigorous. Relevant. Ready. Preparing today's students to address tomorrow's world.

Our public relations consultants surveyed our various constituencies to find out what they value about the University of Minnesota Law School. In particular, our alumni and employers of our alumni are greatly impressed by our graduates' ability to hit the ground running – they have already dealt with real-world problems and have the skills to handle them.

We are also confident that we are successfully training attorneys and leaders for the challenges of the 21st century. Under the guidance of our new Dean, David Wippman, the Law School is embarking on innovations in research, multi-disciplinary studies and curriculum.

Q: What does Minnesota Law look for in choosing candidates for your incoming 1L class?

We are looking for the best and brightest, who can offer diverse perspectives to our classrooms. Of course, credentials are important and we admit applicants with excellent LSAT scores and GPAs. Nonetheless, we evaluate the entirety of the application and seek excellent writers and candidates with a variety of experiences who seek to be leaders and important contributors to society.

Q: It seems that at Minnesota a large percentage of students participate in Clinics – why do you think this is and how does this play into the Minnesota Law experience?

Clinics maintain a very important part in our institution. We opened our first Clinic here at Minnesota in 1914 and today we offer 18 live-client Clinics. Several factors contribute to the excellence of the Clinical experience here. The Minnesota Supreme Court has authorized a very liberal student practice rule – 2Ls can take Clinic prior to taking Evidence. In addition, our location in the midst of a thriving and increasingly diverse metropolitan area provides us with an available client base. Because we can offer so many clinical opportunities, over half of our students opt to enroll in a Clinic at some point during their law school education.

Q: What would you say is unique about your law school?

The University of Minnesota Law School continues to offer leadership and innovation in legal education. Starting this spring, 1Ls will have the opportunity to choose an elective. Choices will include International Law, Corporations, Perspectives on the Law and The Work of the Lawyer. These curriculum changes are designed to take students from basic skills and concepts through more challenging, complex problems and problem-solving strategies. Beginning in 2010, the Law School will introduce year-long, complex, multidisciplinary Capstone courses for 3Ls.

Q: Do you have any advice that you would like Pre-Law Advisors to share with our students?

There are a lot of urban legends out there, and it's really important to get good information. Most law schools will answer the applicant's questions. Ask those who know!

It's hard to emphasize too much the importance of good writing. Lawyers make their living by communicating and usually it is in a written format. Good basic, literate writing is an absolutely necessary skill.

Potential lawyers also seem to think that their training will be in the nature of "big questions". True, but only to a certain extent. Good attorneys pay attention to detail. Applicants can demonstrate their skill in this regard by making sure the personal statements and resumes are completely error-free. Our reviewers note every grammatical mistake and typo.

Don't feel compelled to major in Political Science. We are looking for a variety of disciplines. Take what you like.

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Interview coordinated by Kemi Faleti-Dosunmu from the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Undergraduate Reflection on the CLEO Summer Institute

Katarina Karac, Junior, University of Illinois at Chicago



I first learned about CLEO (the ABA's Council on Legal Education Opportunity) during my sophomore year at the University of Illinois at Chicago. When I attended the Sophomore Super Saturday event in the Fall of 2007, I

did not expect it to be the beginning of my relationship with CLEO. Now, when I reflect on my first encounter with CLEO, I clearly see the positive change it has brought to my life.

In the winter of 2007, I applied to CLEO's Sophomore Summer Institute (SSI) thinking I probably would not get in. Lynda Cevallos, the Pre-Law Coordinator for CLEO, warned us about the possibility of a rejection letter. She had explained SSI to be a rigorous summer program that mimics the first year law school experience in every way. Of course, I thought she was exaggerating.

When I got in, I was ecstatic; I could have broken the kitchen glassware with my high-pitched screams of joy. The truth is, although I had no idea what we were going to do at SSI, I knew that if other ethnic minorities and first generation college grads had become successful attorneys with the help of SSI and other CLEO programs, then I could too.

"We were not received gently by any means. They had promised the first year of law school experience, and they delivered."

When I arrived at Northern Illinois University (NIU), I was taken aback by the diversity of our group. Not only did we have students from places like Alaska, Kansas and the U.S. Virgin Islands, but it was clear that everyone was extremely intelligent, motivated, and involved in

their community. We really encompassed the qualities of an incoming law school class.

We spent three weeks at NIU. The vast highway roads and farmland created a perfect atmosphere for uninterrupted study. Our faculty consisted of law professors. From our Legal Writing Professor, Jeanna L. Hunter, we learned how to read cases, write case briefs, memorandums, arguments, and personal statements. We focused on dog bite statutes, and as a final project, we presented a case in a mock court.

Also, every day we met with Professor Mathew Pamental, who introduced us to basic critical thinking. He helped us identify different types of arguments and fallacies, and as a final project, we had to dissect a complex argument on our own. At the same time, Professor Greg Anderson was teaching us how to tackle LSAT problems. He helped us create a strategy, and he almost convinced us that the LSAT was not so dreadful.

This might sound exceedingly simple to someone who is used to the "I talk, you listen approach," which many college professors employ. We were surrounded by law professors. We were not received gently by any means. They had promised the first year of law school experience, and they delivered.

On our first day, we took the LSAT. For many of us, this was the first encounter with the test questions. Following the exam, we had an intense six hour introduction to reading cases, legal terminology, and case briefs. We were to complete our first case brief that evening. Like most law school students, we stayed up well into the night, discussing the case.

Although we were immersed in study, we still formed close bonds with each other. It would have been irrational to spend days and nights with such fascinating people and not get to know them.

I am very glad to have my CLEO friends. We are very supportive of each other. We might be hundreds or thousands of miles away from one another, but when a CLEO friend tells me great news from back home, I still feel like the success is my own.

"I learned that law is not about where you come from, or how you look, but instead it's how well you know your stuff, and how effectively you express your arguments."

Part of the reason why we bonded so well is because we all come from places where affidavits and torts were never part of our family dinner conversation. Most of us came from working-class families; most of us studied hard and received scholarships for our undergraduate education. We never discussed financing law school. Certainly none of us had that sort of money. But we all had good reasons for going to law school, and with the help of CLEO, we believe we will get there.

There is a change in attitude that occurs when you get so close to your dreams. As a former Bosnian refugee, I could never see myself as an attorney in the United States. I never felt like I could be one of those ubiquitous downtown Chicago attorneys whom I saw every day on my train ride to school. From my experience as an outsider, it seemed as if the general field of law lacked diversity. So for a long time, I spoke of my future as an attorney in passivity.

At SSI, I reconstructed my former passive approach to law school. I learned that law is not about where you come from, or how you look, but instead it's about how well you know your stuff, and how effectively you express your arguments. CLEO has helped me realize that

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CLEO Reflection

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a good law school should embrace diversity of perspectives, rather than allow for homogeneity of thought. Actually, I cannot think of anything worse than being surrounded by people who look and think exactly like me. Its extremely important for Pre-Law students to consider the diversity of students and faculty members in researching prospective law schools.

Finally, I cannot emphasize the importance of CLEO enough. CLEO helps lead disadvantaged students to, and through law school. There really is nothing like it. After we completed SSI, our group was enrolled in an online Junior Analytical Skills Development course with Professor Robert Webking of the University of Texas. We continue to develop the problem-solving skills acquired at SSI. In January, we will be going to Washington, D.C. for the Mid-Winter Academic Enhancement Seminar, where we will take an LSAT as a class, and discuss the online course in person with our professor.

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CLEO is committed to diversifying the legal profession by expanding legal education opportunities to minority, low-income and disadvantaged groups. Over the past 37 years, more than 7,500 students have participated in CLEO's pre-law and law school academic support programs, successfully matriculated through law school, passed the bar exam and joined the legal profession. CLEO alumni, many who had less than traditional academic indicators of success, yet were given an opportunity to attend law school, are represented in every area of the legal profession-private law firms and corporations, law schools, federal and state judiciaries, and legislators across the country. The influence of CLEO alumni in the legal profession, in particular and throughout the country in general, is an indication of the important role CLEO has played in helping to provide a voice to underrepresented groups.

On Campus Interviews

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Employers can generally tell from your previous experience (in your resume and grades) what kind of employee you will be, I think the extra information they are looking for in the interview is what kind of personality you have. While it is completely understandable that some people will be more reserved when they meet their interviewer, you must be as personable and professional as possible. Keep in mind that the legal field is service oriented, and associates will not only have to interact with fellow firm employees, but with clients; and if the interview is a snooze-fest, the interviewer will not likely be inclined to present you to their colleagues or clients.

Another important piece of information I got from practicing attorneys is "have updated copies of your resume, cover letter, transcript, and writing sample with you at all times." While this information has already been given to the employer, it is good to be prepared in case they ask you for an updated copy. Having this ready will show that you are both eager and prepared.

When you have completed an on-campus interview, you should immediately write a letter or e-mail to your screening interviewer, thanking them for the time they took to talk to you. You want to make the correspondence as non-generic as possible since the interviewer will likely be getting standard thank-you notes from everyone they interviewed. If possible, mention something that made the interview memorable in order to distinguish yourself from the pack.

Call-backs are the next step in the process. A call-back is an in

-house interview with a firm where you interview with several attorneys from different practice groups within the firm. The call-back is essentially a longer version of the OCI interview. You will interview with each attorney for about 20 to 30 minutes and when each interview is done you will be escorted to your next interviewer. All the previous advice on OCI is applicable for the call-back, and thank you letters or e-mails also apply for each of the call-back interviewers.

When you have offers in hand, make sure you are familiar with the NALP guidelines for accepting and declining an offer. When you have chosen the firm that best suits you, call and let them know you will be accepting their offer, and then follow up with a letter. As soon as you accept an offer, call any other firm that gave you an offer and let them know that you will be declining, also follow these up with letters.

My experience using the above information went really well. I bid in the Illinois OCI and several job fairs. I received about 30 OCI interviews, but declined to do several, electing to do 17 OCI interviews. Of the 17 OCI interviews I did, I received 13 call-backs and four rejections. Of the call-backs, I declined to go back to 4 of them and elected to do the remaining 9. Of the 9 call-backs, I received 8 offers and one rejection. Thankfully I had options and will be likely splitting the summer with two different firms next summer.

The OCI process is challenging, but fun as well. Apart from meeting new people throughout the process, it allows many people to experience different organizational environments, to see which ones best suit their personalities. The last nugget of wisdom I have is to try to enjoy the process, and collect as many business cards as possible; they will be your colleagues in the

The Mentor Externship Program

David M. Bateson, Director of Mentor Externship, University of St. Thomas School of Law



Lawyers and judges often speak about a gap between legal education and the legal profession, which often appears when new lawyers tackle practical challenges in their

new positions. How is it that a law student can graduate without ever having set foot in a courtroom, or ever having had a conversation about professionalism with a practicing lawyer?

The University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis addresses this program through its required mentor externship program that connects law students to the life of a lawyer.

In each year of law school, students are paired with a respected lawyer or judge in the community who exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism and can introduce students to a wide range of legal tasks and judicial activities and share with them the traditions, ideals, and skills necessary for a successful career. Mentors also help students learn the many unwritten rules, customs, and courtesies of the legal profession to give them an edge as they integrate themselves into the culture of their new profession.

At the start of the year each student is required to consult with his mentor and prepare an individualized personal and professional development plan, identifying what the student would like to accomplish in the mentor relationship. The plan focuses on three objectives:

- To foster the highest levels of professionalism;
- To provide students with a window through which to view professional obligations in the real world and exposure to the diverse spectrum of work of lawyers and judges; and,

Remarks by Cari Haaland, Director of Admissions

As Director of Admissions at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, I have talked with many prospective students about our required Mentor Externship. I am frequently impressed with how receptive prospective students are to the program: they are keenly aware of the benefits of gaining exposure to the various areas of practice and types of legal employers, while gaining valuable skills and building their professional network. Most incoming law students are uncertain about the type of law they want to practice after law school. This unique program offers students the opportunity to begin making distinctions between employer cultures, required skill sets, and billable hour requirements, along with the counseling, writing, and speaking skills that are necessary components of many legal careers.

In response to a survey this fall, almost 60% of our 1L students indicated that the Mentor Externship Program was one of the primary factors affecting their decision to attend the University of St. Thomas School of Law. The only factors that received a higher response rate were Location and the UST Law Community/Quality of Life. The article below was written by Dave Bateson, Director of the Mentor Externship Program. With questions regarding the University of St. Thomas School of Law or the Mentor Externship Program, please feel free to contact Cari Haaland, Director of Admissions, at clhaaland@stthomas.edu or Dave Bateson at dmbateson@stthomas.edu.

- To create opportunities for students to engage in conversations with mentors, full- and part-time faculty, and peers about professionalism, the practice of law, and what they are observing and learning through their mentor experience.

The mentor externship is only successful if the student and mentor are actively engaged in the mentor relationship. The University of St. Thomas dedicates several full-time employees (faculty and staff) to running the program and making sure mentor relationships don't fail. The program provides consistent contact and follow-up with the student and the mentor.

“Mentors also help students learn the many unwritten rules, customs, and courtesies of the legal profession...”

Mentors have a significant impact on the student's professional development. First, a mentor who demonstrates successful work habits, technical skills, and

professional behavior provides a vision of success. Second, mentors offer suggestions on how to address a variety of professionalism issues. For instance, a mentor may provide insight on handling a full caseload, serving all clients with the same level of attention, treating others with civility, and managing one's own work.

The second objective of the program is to provide students with real-world exposure through the eyes of a practicing attorney or a judge. Students often observe or participate in legal or judicial activities. Program experiences are as diverse as the mentors themselves. For example, a student can attend a deposition, help draft a will, or attend a board of directors meeting for a nonprofit. Accomplishing the fieldwork goals with a mentor requires the student to initiate and develop a relationship with a more senior member of the profession. Mentors also help students develop other clients, counseling, engaging in negotiation, diagnosing and planning solutions

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Mentor Externship

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to legal problems, networking within and outside the firm, planning a career, and managing time.

The third objective of the program creates opportunities for students to engage in conversations with mentors, full- and part-time faculty, and peers about professionalism, the practice of law, and what they are observing and learning through their mentor experience. Many lawyers graduate from law school without exploring, in a meaningful way, some of these key professional questions, such as dealing with difficult clients, adversaries, or colleagues, or the role of one’s personal values in professional decision-making. Not only do UST law students engage in these conversations, but they are required to keep journals about them. Keeping journals provides students with an additional opportunity to reflect on the conversation and to think about what it means for their professional development.

Second- and third-year students receive one credit each year for the required classroom component of the program. Classes focus on the key professional relationships lawyers have in serving their communities as well as the key skills that traditionally fall outside of required curriculum. Class topics include client relationship skills, client development skills, firm

operations and management, managing workload, and interpersonal skills and professional sensitivity, specifically for gender and race.



The UST Law mentor externship program can serve as a model for building a foundation of excellence and ideals for law students. Through the program students are on the fast track to becoming valuable assets to their employers and the communities they serve.

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This article is updated and adapted from “Mentors Mind the Legal Gap” coauthored with Assistant Dean Lisa Brabbit. “Mentors Mind the Legal Gap”, *Legal Times*, Vol. XXIX, No. 36 (Sept. 4, 2006).

## News from the Law School Front

*Janet L. Hein, Assistant Dean, Director of Admissions & Financial Aid, University of Dayton School of Law*



I am taking a breather from file-reading to briefly fill you in on this admissions cycle so far.

I am not certain about other schools, but we got off to a bit of a slow start in receiving applications – I think the election and the financial market volatility contributed to this. We do not have national application figures for this cycle from LSAC yet, but many of my colleagues have told me they are flat or slightly up in application volume, compared to last year.

Law school affordability is going to be a major issue this year – a lot of the students I have spoken with are very concerned about costs, and the possibility of scholarships and/or loans. Please reassure your students that federal loans are available to cover tuition and living expenses - both the Stafford and Federal Grad PLUS Loans. But, as always, the Federal Grad PLUS

Loan is somewhat dependent on a student’s credit rating – it is crucial that they pull their credit report and make sure their rating is good enough for this alternative loan. My general advice for students preparing financially for law school is this: learn to budget, cut extraneous purchases and SAVE, SAVE, SAVE!

We just finalized our Admitted Student Law Days - programs set aside for admitted students to visit campus, partake in a class, hear from students and alumni, and get to know our law school. My colleagues have programs such as this, and I encourage your students admitted to a law school to attend these very informative programs. Most of us can also accommodate a student’s schedule if they cannot attend one of these programs.

Finally, I want to alert you to a great website LSAC just initiated: Discover-Law.org. This site is intended for under-represented minority groups, and has a

wealth of information, advice from experts, and useful links. This site offers your students another great way to help them prepare for law school.

That’s it for now – time to dive back into my applications!

### Got a Story to Tell?

MAPLA Briefs is always looking for story ideas to include in each edition. The Briefs come out four times each year and we look for a diverse group of topics to educate pre-law advisors about all aspects of advising, law school, and the legal profession. Please contact Adekemi Faleti-Dosunmu at [afaleti@uic.edu](mailto:afaleti@uic.edu) or RJ Holmes at [rholmes@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:rholmes@cornellcollege.edu) with your suggestions!

*Adekemi Faleti-Dosunmu RJ Holmes*

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Mark your calendars !

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(formerly Chicago City Centre Hotel)

Thursday, October 15  
to Saturday, October 17, 2009

**2009 MAPLA Conference**

**SAVE THE DATE**

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c/o RJ Holmes  
Cornell College Pre-Law Program  
600 First St SW, Box 2316  
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