This handbook is based on a publication of the Public Interest Law Center of New York University School of Law. Many thanks to NYU.

"I am leaving this legacy to all of you ... to bring peace, justice, equality, love and a fulfillment of what our lives should be. Without vision, the people will perish, and without courage and inspiration, dreams will die.” — Rosa Parks

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# 3L Public Interest Job Search Handbook

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A. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. General Job Search Questions

Introduction

As you embark on the search for your first post-graduate job, you should take stock of the wealth of skills, knowledge, and experience that you have gained during your first two years of law school. As a soon-to-be graduate of law school, the world needs your talents and commitment! This handbook is intended to assist you in your search for a terrific public service job.

Reading this handbook is only the first step. If you are interested in applying for government honors programs you should also read Government Honors and Internship Handbook, available at http://www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm. The username and password are fig and newton2. If you are interested in applying for fellowships, you should go to www.pslawnet.org and do an “opportunities” search for fellowships.

We STRONGLY URGE you to make an appointment with a counselor. We will help you assess what jobs are the best fit for you, assist you in constructing an individual timetable, review your cover letter, and do a mock interview. See Appendix 1 for counselor bios.

We look forward to working with you and helping you find a wonderful post-graduate job!

How does Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) work?

The Moritz Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) is designed to help reduce the financial barriers that sometimes prevent Moritz graduates from accepting positions with government or legal services employers - employers whose needs for quality legal professionals often go unmet.

The program supports the college's commitment to students committed to provide affordable legal assistance to those who might not otherwise be able to afford it. Graduates must take qualifying full-time employment by March 15 of the year after graduation, have had at least $4000 in law school loans, and complete the application materials. For all the details on the current program, please go to: http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/careerservices/guides/careers/public/lrap.php

For information on state LRAPs, see http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/sclaid/lrap/statelraps.html. For a list of Legal Services Corporation grantee organizations with employer LRAPs, see http://www.lri.lsc.gov/sitepages/management/management_lrap.htm. For federal agencies with employer LRAPs, contact individual agencies and visit: http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/studentloan/index.asp.
What should be my first post-graduate job?

There is no single answer to that question. We believe the best career advice is that there is no single path. Public interest careers tend to be more idiosyncratic than private sector ones; as the public interest field is still relatively new, you have more opportunity to create your own journey. Some people graduate, go to one organization, and stay there an entire career. Others switch jobs every few years, building skills and developing interests in one job that lead them to the next. Most law graduates can use their courses, clinics, and internships to construct multiple narratives that show they are qualified for a variety of jobs. As you think about where you would like to work, you should assess your individual skills as well as your interests and goals, and think about what competencies you would like to develop in the first years of your career.

Fellowships are an excellent way of beginning a career in public interest law, but they are not the only way. Fellowships have become a prominent way to obtain entry-level jobs simply because many public interest organizations are not able to hire entry-level attorneys. But please do not get discouraged if you do not obtain a fellowship. A good number of public interest organizations do hire through regular job openings—although often not until the spring or summer.

You should also take comfort from the fact that one public interest job inevitably leads to another. We realize that the process (particularly the timing) of obtaining this first job is often anxiety-filled. But those who begin in law firms often have a challenging time transitioning out while alumni in public interest are recruited for subsequent jobs or find subsequent job searches easy, because they have developed more skills, knowledge, and contacts.

What is the timing of the public interest search?

As you know, the public interest job search is quite different from a private sector search. Public interest employers hire according to their own budgets and needs, so the timetable differs for each employer. Public interest students need to have patience and willingness to live with some anxiety, as they will not obtain a job until much later than those working in the private sector.

Generally, hiring begins in the fall for many fellowships, government positions (federal government honor programs, criminal prosecutors in major cities, and municipal law departments), and large public defender offices. Those employers continue hiring throughout the winter and spring. Beginning in late February through the late summer, direct services employers post entry-level jobs for new graduates. These job postings can be found at www.pslawnet.org.

Hiring also depends on practice rules in each state. Some states – New York, Georgia, and Ohio are examples – permit graduates who are awaiting admission to appear in court if they take the first bar exam after graduation. Others, like Colorado, do not allow graduates to appear until they are admitted to the bar. Organizations in these states often will not hire until the fall after graduation, after applicants have passed the bar.
What should I be doing now?

The first step is making an appointment with a counselor to construct a job search plan. Further steps you should take now are: 1) become familiar with PSLawNet’s “opportunities” searches and sign up to receive Email Alerts (can select by practice area, geography, job and organization type); 2) apply for fellowships and government honors programs; 3) interview with public interest and government employers that attend On Campus Interviewing; 4) consider attending the Equal Justice Works Career Fair in Washington, D.C., in October.

We suggest that you keep detailed records of your job efforts. Some students find it helpful to construct a chart with four categories: 1) date of application; 2) group and position; 3) contact person; 4) result/notes.

What is the significance of grades to the public interest job search?

With some exceptions (federal government honors programs, law reform organizations, Skadden Fellowship) most public interest employers do not focus on grades. Instead, they look to see whether applicants have developed specific advocacy skills in litigation, investigation, negotiation, and research and writing, as well as demonstrated commitment to public service. For fellowships, significant exposure to relevant clients and areas of law are invaluable.

What if I obtain a clerkship?

If you obtain a judicial clerkship, we suggest that next spring and summer you prepare for the job search process by becoming familiar with fellowship application procedures. Almost all fellowships encourage applications from “recent graduates.” A number of fellowships prefer judicial clerks, so you will be a well-qualified candidate. If you are interested in applying for fellowships where you have to develop a project, such as Skadden or Equal Justice Works, during this year you can learn about the application process, identify sponsoring organizations, and begin the research and development of the fellowship project.

What is networking, and how is it done?

Very simply, networking is the process of using people connections to gain information about careers and jobs; it is valuable both in finding out about job openings and in securing a job. Some studies show that as many as 70% of jobs are obtained through networking.

Informational interviewing can be valuable in exploring career options that are new to you; most people love to talk about themselves and their work so you can usually finagle at least a brief phone interview with even the most accomplished lawyers.
Now is the time to use the contacts you have developed, including faculty, current and former employers, and fellow students. For people you know, simply send them an email, asking them to let you know about job openings. For example, an email to a former employer might read,

“Hi Paul. Just wanted to let you know that I’ve started my last year at Moritz College of Law. I’ve continued to work on tenant and housing issues and would really like to start my career as a legal services lawyer. I’m focusing my search on Chicago. Please keep me in mind if you hear of any job openings.”

Don’t forget to thank the people who have helped you. If you talk on the phone, a short thank you email is sufficient. However, if someone spends more than an hour with you in a networking meeting, be sure to send a handwritten note.

It is more difficult, but you can also network with people you don’t know. This is especially important if you decide to look for jobs in a subject matter or geographic area that you are not familiar with. It is easier to approach people that you have a connection to and alumni from your college and law school are a good place to start.

**Bar associations:** Becoming a student member of a bar association is an excellent way to increase your knowledge and make contacts. Membership entitles you to various benefits, including the opportunity to be appointed as a student member of a committee. Many otherwise unposted positions may be mentioned in bar publications and listserves.

Moritz students may join the Ohio State Bar Association for free while they are students. Members have access to practice area sections, service sections and the publication of the OSBA, including a Membership Directory online. For information, go to: [www.ohiobar.org](http://www.ohiobar.org)

Locally, the Columbus Bar Association has approximately 4500 members and a number of active practice sections such as the real estate law section, family law, elder law and the like. Student members receive emails, printed publications, and can be listed as associate members in the annual membership directory. Student members are also encouraged to attend section meetings that interest them, typically held during the academic year, at noon, downtown at the CBA offices. For information on membership, please go to: [www.cbalaw.org](http://www.cbalaw.org). You will need a member’s signature to join. Cybele Smith can sign for you.

**How wide should I cast my net and how many jobs should I apply for?**

The best advice is to apply broadly. You should try for your “dream” job, but you should realize that your goals might be accomplished by being flexible and applying to jobs “outside the box” and in broad geographic areas. For example, if you are interested in environmental work, there
are many government agencies that do such work that you may not have considered—such as the Department of Agriculture or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. There is no limit on the number of jobs you may apply to and, unlike the judicial clerkship process, there is no stigma to being offered a job and declining it. Thus, we advise you to apply for ALL jobs that may interest you; you will thereby learn about more opportunities and you may be surprised to discover a job you did not know about. With creativity and persistence, you will find a job that you love!

**What strategies should I use for a job search outside Ohio?**

In addition to using PSLawNet, Idealist, and NLADA to find out about job openings (see also Appendices 4 and 5 for Web Sites for Job Searches), it is advisable to take other steps to find out about potential job openings. Networking is especially important for a job search outside Ohio. Don’t forget to ask professors and former supervisors if they have contacts where you’re looking. Cybele Smith can help you connect with alumni and others who would be happy to serve as a resource in your search process.

Because it is more difficult to find out about job openings in other cities, it is also advisable to write a “cold” letter to any organizations that interest you, asking if they have any openings and enclosing a resume. Another successful strategy is to look at websites for career fairs in other regions to see which employers are interviewing. PSLawNet, [www.pslawnet.org](http://www.pslawnet.org), lists information about all public interest career fairs in the country.

**How many bar exams should I take?**

If you are geographically flexible, you may want to consider taking two bar exams. For example, the New Jersey bar is coordinated with the New York bar so that you can take both in one three-day period. In addition, the New Jersey portion only tests the six multistate subjects that you will already have prepared for the multistate exam. The downside is that each bar exam costs money. However, taking two bar exams is a particularly good option to consider if you think you will ever practice in two states, as it is much easier to take two bar exams at the same time than to take another one years later. The National Conference of Bar Examiners website has links to each of the state bar offices at [www.ncbex.org/offices](http://www.ncbex.org/offices), which detail the reciprocity rules for that state, and the ABA produces useful charts that compare bar admission rules of all states, [www.abanet.org/legaled/publications/compguide2006/chart9.pdf](http://www.abanet.org/legaled/publications/compguide2006/chart9.pdf).

2. **Application Tips: Resume, Cover Letter, Interview**

**What should I include in a job application?**

All applications should include a well-drafted cover letter and resume. It is also advisable to include a list of three references with contact information. Many employers request a writing
sample at a later stage. If they ask for grades or if your grades are good, you also should include an unofficial transcript.

**Can a resume be more than one page?**

Yes, a graduating public interest student’s resume can be more than one page, and in fact usually is, because in the “experience” section you should include clinics as well as internships. However, make sure that every word counts; edit your resume as tightly as possible because most employers will review it very quickly.

**How long should a writing sample be?**

The target length for a writing sample is approximately ten pages. If you are using an excerpt from a longer piece, it is helpful to write a short introduction explaining the context of the section you are submitting. It is important that the sample show your ability to analyze (not merely describe) a legal problem.

**What should I say in my cover letter?**

For a post-graduate job, a one page cover letter is often the most important part of the application—it is your “brief” for why you should be hired. Employers evaluate cover letters as the student’s first writing sample. The goal of a cover letter is to do two things: communicate genuine enthusiasm for the job and explain why you have the skills and knowledge that a particular employer needs. The cover letter should not repeat the resume; instead, it should be a narrative of your skills and knowledge that makes it seem that you have been preparing for this job throughout law school so that the employer can conclude that you are a perfect fit. Most students can construct multiple narratives without being dishonest.

The first step in drafting a persuasive cover letter is to analyze the qualifications an employer is seeking. This can be done by reviewing the “Qualifications Sought” section of a job posting. Employers often specify that they want various skills including research and writing, oral advocacy, organizing, a second language, ability to work as a team, sense of humor, etc. Your cover letter should state that you have the skills this employer is looking for, citing to the various experiences on your resume to demonstrate that you have a particular skill.

The tone of a cover letter is also crucial. You should strive to be unpretentious but confident. For example, instead of saying “I am the candidate you have been looking for,” you might say “I believe that I have developed skills that will enable me to contribute to the work of your organization.” It is important to emphasize what you can contribute, rather than why the job is perfect for you. **See Appendix 7 for sample cover letters.**
How should I prepare for a post-graduate job interview and what questions can I expect?

You should prepare for a job interview by learning as much about the organization, its work, and its attorneys as possible. Employers want to hire applicants who are enthusiastic about working for them and genuine enthusiasm comes from knowledge. This is not the time to communicate that you are keeping your options open; instead some career counselors say that the person who gets the job is the one who communicates that it is his or her dream job.

In researching an organization, you should read its web site, do a Westlaw/Lexis for cases, and a Nexis search for recent news articles. It is wise to ask the names of the people who will interview you so that you can research them also.

Prepare a strong answer to the question “Why do you want this job?” Your answer should be 18 or fewer words. If you are applying to several offices that do similar work, they may ask you to rank your preferences. For example, the Bronx DA may what you would do if you are offered a job by both Manhattan and Bronx. It is always best to answer honestly, but it is permissible to be indirect. A good answer to that question is that it would be a privilege to work as a DA in NYC and then tell them what you like about the Bronx. If a job is your first choice, be sure to make that clear!

Interviews can be demanding, so prepare for hypotheticals and substantive questions about the work the organization does. Also be prepared for hypotheticals that require you to use your knowledge of the broad range of lawyering strategies; litigation, legislation (local, state, and federal); regulatory; public education; community organizing, etc. For example, an interviewer may describe a problem and ask you to outline how you would approach it. Most times, there is no one “right” answer; employers are evaluating your analysis, judgment, and ability to spot issues.

Another favorite question of interviewers is “What do you expect to be doing in 5-10 years?” It is best if your answer to this question relates in some way to the job you are applying for.

We suggest that you prepare for an interview in the same way lawyers prepare for oral arguments:

1) analyze the issues (the job description and the qualifications sought);
2) decide what two to three points you most want to get across about yourself so that you can weave these into your answers;
3) write a list of what questions you can expect based on the organization and its work and outline your answers in writing;
4) think of questions for the employer (ones not answered on the website).

If you prepare in this way, your answers are guaranteed to be more organized and concise than if you “wing it.” Last but not least, be prepared to address any perceived weaknesses in your background that the employer may raise.
What is a behavioral interview?

A behavioral interview is increasingly being used by public interest employers. It is based on the belief that the best predictor of future performance is past behavior. Behavioral interview questions often begin with phrases such as “Tell me about a time . . .” or “describe a situation when . . .” These questions are looking for specific examples of behavior that demonstrates the qualities applicants claim to have. For example, if you describe yourself as “hardworking,” a behavioral interview question will ask for a specific example. The best way to prepare for this type of interview is to think of examples of the concrete challenges you have faced and successes you have had in previous jobs, internships, and clinics. A two page article about this interview technique is set forth in Appendix 6.

How should I dress, sit and use my hands in an interview?

A suit is favored or at least dark business attire. You want the interviewer to focus on your answers, not on your appearance.

Your body posture also sends a message. Thus, we recommend that you do not have a “laid back” posture. It is best to sit with the small of your back against the back of the chair, legs in front of you (not crossed). Keep your arms free so that you can gesture, because gestures often make speech seem more vibrant.

What are special tips for a telephone interview?

For telephone interviews, a good technique is to stand up because your voice will project more energy and enthusiasm. Also, be sure to smile as you speak, as it will make your voice sound friendlier.

Should I ask about salary, hours, and benefits in an interview?

No. An interview is not the time to bring up these issues. They should be discussed AFTER an employer makes you an offer.

Should I send a thank you letter?

YES, you should email a thank you letter IMMEDIATELY after an interview. A thank you note provides an opportunity to reinforce your enthusiasm, skills, and knowledge, as well as to address any problem areas or issues that were not adequately addressed in the interview. For example, after you say how much you enjoyed meeting them etc., you could address any concerns with something like “I’m not sure I explained/emphasized well enough [my litigation experience].” It is best to email individual thank you notes to everyone you met, so be sure to
ask for everyone’s business cards. Email notes are recommended because they can arrive within hours after the interview and can be easily forwarded around an office, which is especially helpful in large offices.

**Can I hold a private firm offer open pending a public interest job search?**

Some students have private firm offers that “expire” before the public interest job search is complete. According to NALP’s “Principles and Standards for Law Placement and Recruitment Activities,” if the offer is made before September 15, the employer should leave an offer open at least until November 1, and upon request by the student, the employer should extend the deadline until December 1 upon receipt of assurances from the student that he or she is holding and will hold no more than one other offer during the extension period. With the consent of the employer, students may extend one offer beyond December 1. Students exploring public interest positions have sometimes been successful negotiating extensions with private sector employers to allow them to conduct a full public interest job search and to participate in fellowship competitions. Please see Cybele Smith if you would like help negotiating more time from a private sector firm.

3. **Public Interest Employers—How They Hire:** Government; Prosecutors; Public Defenders; Direct Services; Law Reform; Public Interest Law Firms; International

a. **Government**

**How does the federal government hire and what are resources for government jobs?**

The federal government generally hires entry-level attorneys through government honors programs. To obtain a complete list of government honors programs, use The Government Honors Handbook, which lists federal, state, and local government honors programs. Because it is continually updated, it is best to use it online at www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm. Username: fig, Password: newton2. Table 1 of the Handbook is a valuable listing of government application deadlines, sorted by deadline date.

If you are interested in non-litigation programs in the federal government, consider applying for the Presidential Management Fellowship Program, www.pmf.opm.gov. This program is highly selective. Fellows are chosen in an all-day interview process and then are appointed to two year appointments. These appointments can be converted to either career or permanent,
excepted service jobs at the end of the fellowship. Candidates must have a graduate degree and be nominated by their school. The Dean’s office handles the nominations; Cybele Smith is the nomination coordinator. Carefully review the “How to Apply” pages in the website, including the Program Overview & Frequently Asked Questions.

Other resources for federal government jobs are:

- USAJobs, [www.usajobs.opm.gov/](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/), a website run by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, is an excellent source of online information for federal job opportunities.
- The United States Government Manual provides a brief description of every agency, its organization, mission, and locations. To download a free copy from the National Archives and Records Administration, go to [www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov).

**What jobs are available in state and city government?**

**State Attorneys General** do a broad array of work, from environmental to education to consumer and anti-trust. It is difficult to make broad generalizations, as the jurisdiction, size, work, and hiring practices of state attorneys general varies significantly. Some offices, such as New Jersey, hire many entry level attorneys each year; others, such as New York, only hire entry level attorneys through Honors Programs. The Ohio Attorney General’s Office usually participates in Fall On Campus Interviewing with intentions of hiring both 2Ls for summer, and 3Ls for Assistant AG positions. For more details go to: [www.ag.state.oh.us](http://www.ag.state.oh.us)

**City Law Departments** represent municipalities in all civil litigation and often hire entry-level attorneys who work in a variety of subject areas, from defending the city in slip-and-fall cases, to bringing affirmative litigation on behalf of the city. In Columbus the City Attorney does hire 1Ls and 2Ls for summer and school year positions, and typically will prefer a 3L for permanent hire if they have worked in the office previously. Historically, no permanent offers are made until a graduate has passed the Ohio Bar. For more information go to: [www.columbuscityattorney.org](http://www.columbuscityattorney.org)

**Agency Attorneys** provide general counsel for various state agencies such as the Department of Health and the Department of Education. For all Ohio state employment opportunities go to: [www.ohio.gov](http://www.ohio.gov), and search under Employment Opportunities.
b. Prosecutors

How and when do County Prosecuting Attorney's Offices hire?

Prosecutors, especially in large cities, regularly hire an entering class and often begin interviewing in the fall for the following year. Thus, you should not wait for a job posting, but either interview on campus or apply in the fall to the offices in which you are interested. Be aware that hiring may depend on budget approvals and may not be finalized until the summer.

Prosecutor’s offices have a three or four stage interview process, during which they may ask hypotheticals or ask you to do a simulated court argument. An example of a common hypothetical asked by prosecutors is the “uncooperative domestic violence victim.” A good source listing county prosecutors is www.prosecutor.info.

What qualities do prosecutors look for in hiring?

All offices want to know why an applicant is interested in being a prosecutor and determining if an applicant understands that the role of a prosecutor is to do justice (not to accumulate convictions). Because prosecutors are given so much responsibility for decision-making and must work with not only opposing lawyers and judges but also police officers and distraught victims, the most important qualities are exceptional interpersonal skills: integrity, judgment, maturity, and ethics. Although prosecutors expect students to have performed well in Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, and Evidence, academic performance is seen to be only one indicator of an applicant’s potential. As much or more attention is given to practical experience where candidates have had to “think on their feet,” such as clinics, internships, moot court, extracurriculars (e.g. student government, BLSA, etc.) and even theatre. Prior leadership experience and a demonstrated commitment to public service are also important. Working in a prosecutor’s office is a terrific way to obtain trial experience and might be especially attractive to people who are interested in specific issues, such as domestic violence or child abuse.

How do U.S. Attorneys offices hire?

Many U.S. Attorneys offices, such as those in New York City, do not regularly hire graduating students but prefer lawyers with two or more years of litigation experience. However, U.S. Attorneys offices in other parts of the country may hire after a clerkship. In general, these offices prefer applicants who have clerked, especially for federal judges in the district where one seeks to work.

These offices seek experience in both writing AND arguing in court. They hire from a variety of backgrounds, large and small firms, as well as local prosecutors' offices. The key is that you need to develop both written and oral advocacy skills. Hence, if one works in a local prosecutor's office where there is a lot of in-court experience to be had but generally not a lot of writing, applicants should look for outlets to hone writing skills. The reverse is the big-firm attorney who
writes a lot and probably well but has little opportunity for oral advocacy. Those applicants may need to do a pro bono case to obtain oral advocacy experience. Moritz students with work-study eligibility can get excellent experience in their first and second years of law school working in the Columbus U.S. Attorney’s Office. Typically, the Columbus office does require multiple years of litigation practice in order to be hired on a permanent basis.

c. Public Defenders: How and when do they hire?

One of the largest job categories for public interest graduates is public defender offices, many of which hire a group of entry-level attorneys annually, because Gideon v. Wainwright, 372 U.S. 335 (1963), guaranteed the right to counsel in felony cases. The National Legal Aid and Defender Association, www.nlada.org, is an excellent source for finding public defender offices throughout the country.

A good number of public defenders interview at the Equal Justice Works Career Fair in D.C. in October.

Large public defender offices follow a set hiring procedure, often consisting of two or more interviews. For example, the procedure at the Public Defender Service of Washington, D.C., is as follows:

We have a three tier process: the first step is either the on-campus interview or a telephone interview for folks who apply directly. The on-campus has one to three hypos that may or may not include a small role play, and general conversation to determine why the candidate is interested in PDS and being a public defender, etc. The interview isn’t very substantive; there is no law and even the hypos are designed more to learn about the candidate's thought process and problem-solving skills.

If a candidate is asked to move to the callback stage, s/he needs to complete the application packet (two essays on the website) and mail that in by mid October. Callbacks are 1/2 hour and consist of a similar interview with more complex hypos and perhaps role playing.

If a candidate is called to the third and final interview, s/he will meet with our director, deputy director, trial chief, and general counsel. This interview lasts between 1 and 1.5 hours. This interview builds on the first two and is a continuing exploration of the candidate's thought processes, etc. In addition, the candidate will receive in advance of the interview an opening statement exercise; they have to stand and give the opening during the final interview.

What qualities do public defenders look for in hiring?

Like prosecutors, public defenders look for students who have taken Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, and Evidence; have strong interpersonal skills, and have gained significant oral advocacy experience through clinics, internships, moot court, etc.
In addition, defender offices look for people who are: (1) zealously client-protective and willing to do all that one can, within the bounds of the rules of ethics, to produce the best result for the client; (2) very respectful of the client's decision-making prerogatives, certainly with regard to decisions that the rules of ethics allocate to the client (whether to take a guilty plea; whether to take the witness stand; what sentence to seek), but also with regard to matters that are technically assigned to counsel for determination (the selection of the theory of the case, for example) but on which the client might have a strong view; and (3) attuned to the goal of treating the client as a partner in the enterprise and thereby empowering the client. In preparing for public defender interviews, it is helpful to be reflective about why you want to be a public defender.

d. Direct Services: How and when do direct services providers hire and what qualities do they look for?

Direct service providers include legal services offices which work on a broad range of issues as well as single issue organizations that exist in many cities that focus on one issue or population, such as advocacy on behalf of children or immigrants. With some exceptions (large offices in large cities), these organizations generally do not have the budget to hire entry-level “classes” of attorneys in the same way that prosecutors and public defenders do. Thus, they only hire when openings become available; openings are advertised from about February through summer for post-graduate positions. The National Legal Aid and Defender Association, www.nlada.org, is an excellent source for finding direct services offices throughout the country.; also check www.pslawnet.org for job openings.

Because the mission of direct service providers is to serve many low-income individuals, the work involves close client contact and substantial casework. Casework involves a variety of tasks, from writing a demand letter to doing an administrative hearing before a government agency, to litigating in state or federal court. Many offices augment individual representation with law reform efforts and community education and organizing

Direct service providers value people who can produce high quality written work efficiently and who have experience interviewing clients, working with community groups, negotiating with administrative agencies, and oral advocacy. Many organizations prefer applicants who can speak the native language of their clients; there are some jobs that require Spanish fluency, for example.

e. Law Reform/Policy Organizations: How and when do they hire and what qualities do they look for?

Law reform organizations differ from direct service providers in that they focus on changing the law rather than serving large numbers of individual clients. They may do litigation, policy work, or both. In this era, public interest lawyering is increasingly multi-strategic, relying on a combination of litigation, community outreach, education, media strategies, and legislative and regulatory advocacy. Impact organizations differ widely in their scope and focus. Some focus
on one issue, such as the environment or women’s rights and some work on many issues. Some have only one office, some have several. For example, Earth Justice has eight offices around the country and the ACLU has an office in every state, with the goal to have a lawyer in each one. In many states, the ACLU is one of the only organizations doing law reform work.

Generally, impact organizations only hire entry-level attorneys through fellowships, either internal ones at the organization itself or project ones funded by an outside entity such as Skadden or Equal Justice Works. Fellowship deadlines and hiring decisions range throughout the year, from early fall to late spring. Because impact organizations do complex litigation, they tend to value evidence of the ability to do complex research, writing, and analysis. They look for clinic experience, internships at impact organizations, journal work and judicial clerkships.

**f. International Public Interest: How to break into the field?**

International employers look for, among other things, field experience, specialized knowledge of international law (e.g. transitional justice, public international law, international environmental law, etc.), language skills, and the ability to write for various audiences. Geographic flexibility is also helpful.

There are very few entry-level international jobs aside from fellowships, so this can be a very difficult field to break into. It is important for students to use their summers and their time in law school strategically by doing internships and clinics, publishing a note on a timely human rights topic, perfecting language skills, etc. This may position 3Ls to compete for more advanced positions upon graduation. Networking is also incredibly important in this field, and personal recommendations can be essential for getting a job. Some students decide to go to a developing country after graduation to gain field experience, perhaps starting off by volunteering for a local NGO and networking to position themselves for paid employment.

For those interested in international organizations such as the United Nations and UN agencies, there are four main ways to get hired, but none of them are easy – especially if you are from a country that is already “overrepresented” within the UN system. First is through competitive exams offered each year, for certain nationalities. Second is through the Junior Professionals Program funded by certain countries (but not usually offered by the US). The third is by applying for postings listed on their websites, though this can be like buying a lottery ticket, as they may get hundreds of applications and / or have an internal candidate in mind – don’t feel rejected if you apply for 30 positions and hear nothing. The last is by applying for short-term contract positions, which are usually advertised only by word of mouth through networks.

Many jobs in this field, not only at the UN, are consultancies for limited periods of time. Obtaining one consultancy can often lead to others, or to longer-term paid work. The downsides of contract work include lack of employer-paid benefits and lack of information – many consultancies are not posted and are only communicated within professional networks (which makes networking all the more important – no one will send you a job notice if they don’t know who you are).
Finally, a word on timing. Outside of fellowships, international organizations hire primarily when they have an opening: when someone quits or when they get a new grant. Hence, they typically seek to hire someone who can start right away. Compared with other legal hiring, this can be late in the cycle and there is no guarantee that students will get a job before graduation or before the bar exam. It is worth noting that even experienced international lawyers in the public sector may find themselves stringing together a series of fixed-term contracts and may experience gaps in employment throughout their careers, and students should consider whether they are comfortable with this lifestyle.

g. Public Interest Law Firms: How and when do they hire and what do qualities do they look for?

Public interest law firms are private firms that view their mission as primarily public service. Most concentrate on one or two practice areas, such as criminal defense, labor/employment, or family law. Because they are often small, they only rarely hire entry-level attorneys. When they do hire, they look for strong research and writing skills as well as skilled oral advocates.

B. WHERE TO FIND PUBLIC INTEREST JOBS

1. Job Search Resources

Now that you are looking for a permanent job, it is more important to be aware of current job listings. See Appendix 4 for a list of web sites for domestic job searches and Appendix 5 for a list of web sites for international jobs.

Public Service Law Network Worldwide (www.PSLawNet.org). You should become familiar with the “opportunities” search feature of PSLawNet, which allows you to search for current openings. To access the database, register at www.pslawnet.org. You may use the database while you are in law school and as an alumnus. You can search the database by geographical region, type of organization, and practice area.

If you are interested in receiving e-mails that will inform you of job listings that match your interests, submit a personal profile. PSLawNet will then automatically send you notices of opportunities that match the criteria you submit.

Symplicity. Please make sure your registration and resume are up to date on Symplicity. Also, get in the habit of checking job postings and student announcements regularly.

The Web Site. Please go to: http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/careerservices/jobs/ for tons of information on all types of jobs and contact information, as well as links to other helpful websites.
2. **OCI-On Campus Interviewing and Opportunity Forum**

Typically a handful of government employers participate in our Fall and Spring On Campus recruitment programs. Most notably, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office will recruit 2L and 3L students for summer and permanent positions in the fall. The Public Service Opportunity Forum brings approximately 25 employers from central Ohio to Drinko Hall seeking summer and term-time help in the form of paid, work-study and volunteer positions. Typically the Forum is held in the Spring.

3. **EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS CAREER FAIR**

We participate in the Equal Justice Works (EJW) Career Fair held in Washington, D.C., scheduled for October, which features interviewers and “table talks” (information tables) with about 150 public interest and government employers, as well as panel discussions. The EJW Fair is particularly good for 3L students interested in being public defenders. To register for the Fair, register on the EJW website, [http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/employers/browse.php](http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/employers/browse.php). For the EJW Fair you submit resumes and other requested information directly to the employer. After you submit your resumes, the employers will contact you to schedule interviews. **Students are strongly encouraged to submit resumes to employers several weeks before the Fair to allow sufficient time for resume review and scheduling of interviews.** EJW recommends that students submit their resumes to employers the date specified on the website annually.

4. **MIDWEST PUBLIC INTEREST LAW CAREER CONFERENCE**

Each February, Moritz students are invited to attend the Midwest Public Interest Law Career Conference in Chicago. This conference brings together a variety of Midwest based employers seeking summer and permanent employees in the public sector. Typically invited organizations include government agencies, direct legal service providers, and policy organizations.
Appendix 1: Career Counselor Biographies

Cybele Smith
Director of Public Service & Public Interest Programs

Phone: (614) 292-7707
Email: smith.302@osu.edu
Office: Drisko 104B

Education
B.A., The Ohio State University
J.D., Capital University Law School
Cybele currently focuses on advising students who are interested in public interest and government sector jobs, honors programs, and fellowships. She coordinates the judicial clerkship application process and serves as the LRAP Coordinator.

As an undergraduate, Cybele had the opportunity to work in the OSU Athletic Department as a Student Assistant to Archie Griffin. During law school, she worked full-time for the State of Ohio at the Rehabilitation Services Commission and later at the Ohio Civil Rights Commission as an investigator. While at Capital University Law School, Cybele was involved in several organizations, serving as vice magister of Phi Delta Phi, executive board member of the Student Bar Association, and as a peer advisor for three years.

Upon earning her law degree, Cybele became the Membership Director at the Columbus Bar Association. She has presented at the NALP annual conference and has done book reviews for the NALP publication committee. Cybele recently completed a three-year term on the University Staff Advisory Committee, and a two-year appointment to the university Government Relations Committee. She was the NALP Workgroup Leader for the NALP/PSLawNet Mini Conference in Washington, D.C., in October 2006 and is currently the Vice Chair planning the NALP Educational Conference which will be held in Toronto in April 2008. She is the 2008 Awards Chair for the AALS Section on Pro Bono and Public Service Opportunities.

She also teaches career strategy in the Legal Nurse Consulting Program at Capital University in the spring.
Appendix 2: Timeline for Planning a Public Interest Career

ONGOING
• Review Calendar for events of interest to you.
• Build public interest credentials: student-run pro bono organizations, term-time and summer internships, clinics, journals, leadership in organizations.
• Attend EJW Career Fair. If you have a job, network with employers at Table Talk.
• Network and conduct informational interviews with public interest students and alumni.

THIRD YEAR

Fall
• Review on campus deadlines, Government Honors Handbook and PSLawNet fellowship information to construct personal calendar of deadlines.
• Meet with counselor to plan post-grad job strategy; revise resume; draft cover letter. Ask for copy of successful fellowship application materials.
• Sign up to have jobs emailed to you from PSLawNet.

For project fellowships:
Finalize application. Schedule a meeting with Cybele Smith to go over your materials and plan for time to make changes before the final application is due.

For organization fellowships and government honors programs:
Network with prior fellows before finalizing application materials; prepare for interviews. Cybele Smith can help you connect with former fellows and answer questions about the process.

For public defender, prosecutor, and government jobs:
Determine if agencies you are interested in are interviewing at On Campus Interviewing or Equal Justice Works Fair in Washington, D.C.

Spring/Summer
• Apply for fellowships with spring deadlines.
• Apply for non-fellowship jobs that post announcements in spring and summer.
Appendix 3: Moritz Law Library Resources

Public Interest Directories/Domestic
The Directory of Legal Aid and Defender Offices, National Legal Aid & Defender Association

Public Interest Directories/International
Guide to Funding for International & Foreign Programs, The Foundation Center
UN Directory of Non-Governmental Organization Associated with the Department of Public Information

Fellowships
Public Interest Fellowships, Yale Law School*

Government
Government Honors & Internship Handbook, Univ. of Arizona College of Law
Federal Legal Employment Opportunities Guide, NALP, in cooperation with Partnership for Public Service
Working on Capitol Hill, Yale Law School*

Public Interest Law Firms
AFL-CIO Directory of Lawyers’ Coordinating Committee
National Employment Lawyers Association Membership Directory and Guide to Member Services
Private Public Interest and Plaintiff’s Firm Guide, Columbia Law School and Harvard Law School**

Subject-specific guides
Environmental Law Guide, Yale Law School,
http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/CDOPublications.asp
Guide to Internships and Fellowships in Reproductive Rights, Law Students for Choice

*Yale guides available in CSO.
**Available in CSO.
Appendix 4: Websites for Domestic Job Searches

General Online resources are available at:
http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/careerservices/jobs/useful_links.php

GENERAL
PSLawNet, www.pslawnet.org (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)
Comprehensive listing of public interest legal positions, including volunteer opportunities, paid summer positions, and post-graduate positions and fellowships.

Idealist (Action without Borders), www.idealist.org (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)
Comprehensive listing of public service positions, both legal and non-legal, in over 140 countries. This is an especially good site for post-graduate job listings. Searchable by subject matter, country, type of position, and other categories.

National Legal Aid & Defender Association, www.nlada.org/jobop.htm (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)
This is the best site for post-graduate jobs in civil legal services organizations and defender organizations. Other public interest organizations are also listed. Searchable by state.

Foundation Center, www.foundationcenter.org
Provides information about every foundation in the country. Much of this information is free, but some of it is for paying subscribers only. Job corner contains a database of job openings in foundations, corporate grant makers, and other nonprofit organizations. Searchable by type of employer and region.

GOVERNMENT
Contains information on federal government post-graduate honors programs and summer internship programs. Username: fig Password: newton2.

This is the federal government’s official one-stop source for federal jobs (permanent and internships) and employment information. Searchable by position, salary, and geographic location. Updated every business day. Can create an “agent” to email particular kinds of opportunities as soon as they are posted. Note: when searching for federal jobs, you should also check the agency site, as not every job makes it into USA JOBS.

National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG), www.naag.org
The most comprehensive online site for the latest developments in the offices of the state Attorneys General throughout the country, including ground-breaking litigation, new appointments, and job opportunities.

Fedworld, www.fedworld.gov
Contains job listings, both law-related and other, with the federal government. Run by the Dep’t of Commerce and links to USA Jobs.

Similar to OPM and Fedworld sites listed above, this site is notable because it contains links to state government web pages.

Roll Call Jobs, www.rcjobs.com
Features jobs in government affairs, lobbying and other positions with organizations that do lobbying and other work with the federal government.

LOCATION-SPECIFIC JOB SITES

For information on all states:  http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/careerservices/jobs/useful_links.php

Ohio,
www.ohiobar.org Ohio State Bar Association. Weekly publication includes legal job openings from around Ohio.
www.ohio.gov: Includes job postings from every Ohio state agency, searchable by county or agency.
www.sconet.state.oh.us/: Supreme Court of Ohio, repository for many court-related and mediation positions from across Ohio and provides a guide to Ohio Appellate Courts.
www.ohiolegalservices.org/OSLSA/PublicWeb: Provides information on services, jurisdiction, volunteer and paid opportunities in Ohio.
www.olaf.org/probonoresources/index.shtml: Provides information on funding, and pro bono opportunities throughout Ohio.

Chicago, http://www.chicagobar.org/careerresources/
To help law school graduates search for a public sector career, the Chicago Bar Association Government Services Committee and the Young Lawyers Section of the Chicago Bar Association of Chicago have compiled the most current hiring information available on numerous government agencies in Chicago.

Minnesota, www.mnjustice.org
The site of the Minnesota Justice Foundation, this site lists Minnesota legal internships.

New York City, www.gothamgazette.com
Gotham Gazette Classifieds, an on-line listing of public service jobs in New York City, includes many law-related jobs.

New York City (government jobs), www.nyc.gov/portal/index.jsp

SUBJECT-MATTER SPECIFIC

Elaw, www.elaw.org
Run by Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide, this site lists organizations worldwide that do environmental work.

National Fair Housing Advocate, www.fairhousing.com
Lists positions with organizations and governmental agencies dealing with fair housing issues.
Appendix 5: Websites for International Job Searches

Included here are bulletin boards or compilations of listings related to international public interest. We have also listed some specific organizations or entities, although this is only a sample of the major organizations – there are many more out there!

**GENERAL**

**ABA-Section of International Law, Human Rights Committee E-Brief**

**American Society of International Law**
Career resources for students are listed at [http://www.asil.org/careers/careerwebsites.html](http://www.asil.org/careers/careerwebsites.html).

**Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)**

**Communication Initiative**
Website designed to facilitate communication among development professionals (legal and non-legal). Vacancies are listed at [http://www.comminit.com/vacancies.html](http://www.comminit.com/vacancies.html).

**DevNet Jobs**
Job listings in the development field, including many related to human rights and humanitarian work. Membership is required to view some listings. Free newsletter. [www.DevNetJobs.org](http://www.DevNetJobs.org)

**Foreign Policy Association**
Website and also weekly jobs newsletter. [http://www.fpa.org/jobs_contact2423/jobs_contact.htm](http://www.fpa.org/jobs_contact2423/jobs_contact.htm)

**Human Rights Blog** [http://www.humanrightsblog.org/listings/](http://www.humanrightsblog.org/listings/)

**Human Rights Job Board**
For a complete list, enter nothing and click on “search.” [http://www.hri.ca/jobboard/](http://www.hri.ca/jobboard/)

**Human Rights Jobs**
Some jobs open to all, others are for members only. [http://www.humanrightsjobs.com/](http://www.humanrightsjobs.com/)

**Human Rights Resource Center**
Links to numerous job pages at NGOs and inter-governmental organizations. [http://www.hrusa.org/field/joblinks.shtml](http://www.hrusa.org/field/joblinks.shtml)

**Human Rights Tools**
This website has a variety of tools for human rights professionals. Job listings can be found at [http://jobs.humanrightstools.org/](http://jobs.humanrightstools.org/).

**Idealist.org**
Job listings in public service, including human rights positions throughout the world. If you enter your profile, Idealist will send you relevant listings. To sign up, fill out a profile at:
One World
Similar to idealist.org.  [http://us.oneworld.net/section/us/jobs](http://us.oneworld.net/section/us/jobs)

PSLawNet
Can search organizations, jobs, fellowships and internships (paid and unpaid) throughout the world. Has better coverage of some countries than others.  [www.pslawnet.org](http://www.pslawnet.org)

ReliefWeb
Lots of field positions are advertised here for mostly humanitarian and some human rights jobs.  [http://www.reliefweb.int/vacancies/](http://www.reliefweb.int/vacancies/)

**REGIONAL JOB LISTINGS**

American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages
Job index for people with Slavic language skills.  [http://aatseel.org/jobs/job-index.asp](http://aatseel.org/jobs/job-index.asp)

Pambazuka News

PAE-REACT
This is the contractor paid by the US State Department to select US citizens for seconded jobs with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.  [www.pae-react.com](http://www.pae-react.com)

**INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Preference to citizens of States parties, so Americans beware!

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
Theoretically the ICTY’s jobs are listed on the main UN site, but this is not always the case.  [http://www.un.org/icty/pratical-e/index.htm](http://www.un.org/icty/pratical-e/index.htm)

United Nations
For information on the competitive exam, see  [http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm)

UN Development Program
For information on UNDP Leadership Development Program see  [http://www.undp.org/lead/](http://www.undp.org/lead/)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Theoretically the High Commissioner’s vacancies are all listed on the UN site, but in reality there are often jobs here that are never posted to the main site.  [http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/vacancies/index.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/vacancies/index.htm)
UN High Commissioner for Refugees
Information on external vacancies and international professional roster at http://www.unhcr.org/admin/3ba1bdcb7.html.

UNICEF

INTERNATIONAL NGOS
American Bar Association Rule of Law Programs
http://www.abanet.org/ceeli/program/staffpositions.html


Center for Reproductive Rights, http://www.crlp.org/ab_employment.html#lc

Global Rights http://www.globalrights.org/site/PageServer?pagename=wwcd_index_44

Human Rights First http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/about_us/about_us.htm

Human Rights Watch http://www.hrw.org/jobs/


International Committee of the Red Cross www.cicr.org

International Crisis Group http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1152&l=1

International Rescue Committee http://www.theirc.org/jobs/index.html

Open Society Institute http://www.soros.org/about/careers

DOMESTIC ORGANIZATIONS (sometimes have opportunities in international law)

ACLU, http://www.aclu.org/jobs/jobsmain.cfm

Appendix 6: Building Interview Skills: What to Tell Students About the Behavioral Interview,” January 2005 NALP Bulletin (reprinted w/permission)

Building Interview Skills: What to Tell Students about the Behavioral Interview

This law school perspective on preparing for behavioral interviewing may also suggest interviewing strategies to employers.

by Patricia White

Career services staff are always on the lookout for ways to help students improve their interview skills. Your students will have a distinct advantage when interviewing if you familiarize them with the purpose of — and how to prepare for — the "behavioral interview." This interviewing technique has been used effectively in the business world by such diverse companies as Wachovia, Accenture, "Westing Home Entertainment, and "Southwest for some time, and a number of law firm interviewers are now recognizing the benefits of behavioral interviewing.

What is a behavioral interview and why do employers use this method?

Behavioral interviewing is based upon the premise that the best predictor of future behavior and performance is past behavior and performance in a similar situation. Given the extremely high cost of recruiting, hiring, training, and mentoring new associates, law firms want to do all they can to ensure that their new hires will be stable, productive, successful lawyers. The behavioral interview technique utilizes a questioning style quite different from the standard, "Tell me about yourself," or "What are your three greatest strengths?"

Behavioral interview questions often begin with phrases such as, "Tell me about a time ..." or "Describe a situation when ...." These types of questions can be quite daunting for the student who is unfamiliar with the style and who doesn't understand the interviewer's purpose in asking such questions. In her book, "Lawyers' Professional Development," writes that "law firms are taking a more strategic approach to hiring by establishing hiring criteria beyond the achievements reflected in resumes. Abbott says that these "criteria target the characteristics of lawyers needed to build and sustain the firm, and they make the recruitment process more precise and effective." To maximize the value of behavioral interviews, those who use them have identified the characteristics and behaviors of their most successful associates and have designed questions to elicit whether the candidates being interviewed have exhibited those traits and actions in their previous work experience.

An example of a characteristic firms value is "motivation." As Carolyn Wehman points out in her October 2003 NALP Bulletin article, "Using Behavioral Interviewing to Target Talent," once criteria are defined, it is helpful for employers to develop specific descriptions of how those criteria are demonstrated. A description of how a motivated lawyer behaves might include, "takes initiative, seeks additional responsibility, responds to criticism, organizes time and work."

With this definition of motivation, an interviewer will be looking for descriptions of specific past performance that demonstrate that the student has behaved in the desired way in the past. Thus a student may be asked, "Tell me about a time when you went beyond the call of duty and performed beyond what was expected," or "Describe how you motivate yourself to do a task that you really don't want to do?"

Students must be prepared to discuss specific examples of behavior that demonstrate the qualities they claim to have. They cannot fall back on their laundry lists of admirable traits such as being "hard-working," "dedicated," or "detail-oriented.

Help them prepare

Many career counselors organize their career planning advice around a series of steps that begin with self-assessment and researching employers. We often meet with student resistance to the concept of self-assessment, but never is it more important that a student have completed this exercise than in the behavioral interview situation. Because of the probing nature of behavioral interview questions, it is especially important that students engage in significant introspection so that they understand such things as:

- Why they have made the life decisions they have made (this reflects their values, talents, and motivations); and
- How to provide specific examples of behavior that demonstrates they have the characteristics and traits an employer seeks. (This is where a student's research skills come into play.)

If a student is responding to a specific job description or an OCS posting, it may be easy to determine what characteristics are sought. Many firms clearly state the qualities they value on their web site or NALP listing. However, even when a student cannot access this type of information for a particular employer, they can prepare by considering these characteristics that employers commonly value and seek out in their employees; that is, through their self-assessment, students can identify the behaviors that show they have demonstrated those traits.

Four characteristics/behaviors that legal employers find desirable

Some key competencies and patterns of behavior that law firms recognize as important to lawyers’ success are decision-making and problem-solving skills, motivation, communication, and interpersonal skills, and planning and organization. Here are some sample questions that interviewers often use to elicit descriptions of these behaviors:

- Decision making and problem solving. Give an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision. "Tell me about the most difficult decision you had to make within the last year. Give me an example of a time when you used good..."
judgment and logic in solving a problem. Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem. Tell me about a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures. Tell me about a time when you failed to spot an obvious solution to a problem.

■ Motivation. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low). What have you done that demonstrates initiative? How did you compensate? What was your best performance from you? What type of work environment do you need for the best performance you? Tell me about a time when you failed to meet your expectations.

■ Communication and Interpersonal skills. Tell me about a time when you had to persuade a coworker or colleague to accomplish a task or to see your point of view. Describe an unpopular decision you have made and how you dealt with the results. Tell me about a time you had to deal with an individual you did not like, or who did not like you. Tell me about a time when you had to work with a person who did things very differently from you.

■ Planning and Organization. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and had to prioritize your tasks. What method did you use to schedule your time? Give me an example of how you handle interruptions to your schedule. Everyone has had an experience when they just could not complete a project on time — when has this happened to you? How do you determine what is critical and what is not? Tell me about a time you created a plan to accomplish a long-range project or goal.

Tools students can use to prepare

Two tools will assist your students in preparing for behavioral interviews: their resumes and a three-step process for organizing their answers. Using their resumes as a guide, students should thoughtfully consider the projects, tasks, and interactions represented by their previous employment. It may have been some time since they thought about a particular job, and their resume will help refresh memories about specific job performances. Students should try to identify particularly challenging and difficult, as well as especially rewarding, experiences. They can use the sample questions listed below to practice describing work-related experiences that demonstrate the behavior being sought.

Students need a method of organizing their answers so that their responses do not become rambling and unfocused. A common format career planning experts suggest is the STAR method. When using this technique, the interviewee should:

■ Briefly describe the Situation or Task;
■ Explain the Action that he or she took; and
■ Describe the Results of the action.

Using this organizational strategy will help students keep their answers concise and specific.

Student FAQs

Some students will feel intimidated by the prospect of the behavioral interview style because they either have had no pre-law school work experience or they consider their work experiences irrelevant. In these cases, students can call upon academic experiences (organizing assignments, prioritizing tasks, working in a study group or other collaborative project), reflecting upon their non-law related work experiences, volunteer activities, competitive sports involvement, and other areas of interest can yield examples of behavior that can be used to answer these interview questions as well.

Behavioral interview questions are often phrased in the negative, such as, "Tell me about a time when your work was criticized." Here, the information sought is a description of the candidate's faults as well as how he or she handles criticism. A student would be wise to respond with a description of a poor idea rather than a poor work product, which might unnecessarily focus negative attention on performance. Discussing a poor idea also offers a better opportunity to describe what was learned from the experience, which is the goal any time questions about negative experiences are asked. In this example, a student could discuss an employer's criticism of his or her idea about how to approach a research problem, what he or she gained or learned from that criticism, and how he or she then proceeded.

The outcome or Result of the Situation then becomes positive.

Even with the most thorough self-assessment, research, and preparation, students will be asked questions they feel they don't know how to answer. First of all, students should understand that it is perfectly acceptable to ask for clarification of a question by saying, "I'm not sure what kind of information you'd like to provide here. Can you be more specific?" Students should also feel free to thoughtfully reflect upon a question before answering. Rather than feeling compelled to answer immediately, students should maintain control of their responses by saying something like, "Do you mind if I take a moment to think about that?" And, if nothing comes to mind, an acceptable answer is, "Although I've never actually missed a deadline, I've come close and have had to reorganize my tasks."

"Do I have to tell them everything?"

Students should keep in mind that a job interview is not "Free Confessions." Although career services professionals counsel students to be scrupulously truthful in their application materials, that does not mean that they must volunteer negative information unless they are directly asked the question. As Martha Nei notes in her article "Avoiding或Answering the "A"-Words" in the September 2004 issue of the ABA Journal, candidates should keep their answers simple and not offer information that reflects poorly on them. When a truthful answer to a direct question requires a negative response, students should be prepared to provide the honest answer, together with a brief explanation for the deficiency and their plan for improvement.

"What if it doesn't seem like a behavioral interview but just an effort to make conversation?"

Sometimes questions that don't seem to fall into the pattern of behavioral interview questions are aimed at uncovering behaviors that are important to the employer. A question like "What kinds of activities do you enjoy when you're not studying or working?" may be designed to elicit whether a student is a team player or a loner, highly competitive or unambitious, civic-minded or self-centered. Students need to think about what may be behind a question being asked.

Conclusion

Understanding and preparing for behavioral interviews give students a more effective way to hone their interviewing skills. Regardless of whether they encounter this technique, the self-assessment, employer research, and thoughtful reflection upon their work experiences and other activities will prepare students to excel in the interview room.
Appendix 7: Sample Cover Letters

1. Environmental organization

Ellie Jones
321 East 14th St. Apt. 10
New York, NY 10003
ejones@stsl.edu
April 8, 2006

Heather Hill, Legal Director
Earthjustice
426 17th Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Ms. Hill:

I will be completing my JD at Sojourner Truth School of Law in May and I am writing to apply for the position of Associate Attorney in Earthjustice’s International Program. At Sojourner Truth, I have gained expertise in aspects of international law including international trade, human rights, law and development, and international criminal law. A position applying rigorous legal advocacy to address international harms in these areas is the dream job I have been preparing for and I believe I would be able to make a significant contribution to the work of Earthjustice.

Through my course work and extracurricular activities in law school, I have developed strong written and oral advocacy skills. I engaged in extensive complex legal analysis and writing for the Asylum Program at Human Rights First, where I drafted legal memoranda on the immigration status of stateless persons. My oral advocacy skills have been honed in a variety of contexts. Most notably, I was a semi-finalist in a WTO moot court competition in Geneva, Switzerland, involving the right of developed countries to grant trade preferences to developing countries meeting certain criteria for limited use of pesticides.

Prior to and during law school, I have demonstrated initiative, whether in facilitating the creation of a national NGO network in support of girls’ education as a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo, or devising programming during my clinical work with a South Asian community organization during law school. I have collaborated with a wide variety of colleagues, from international student members of my moot court team to United Nations officials. As you will see from my resume, I have a deep commitment to international justice and sustainable development. Although my environmental experience is not as extensive as my experience in trade and human rights, I have addressed environmental issues as a component of sustainable development in both my course work and professional experience.

I am eager to apply my skills, knowledge, work ethic and sense of humor to the work of Earthjustice. Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (ecj252@nyu.edu), or by phone (917-435-9263). I look forward to talking with you.

Very truly yours,

Ellie Jones
Luis Rodriguez, Esq.
Office of the Los Angeles Public Defender
210 West Temple Street, 19th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Rodriguez:

As you know, I am a third year student at Sojourner Truth School of Law and I am writing to express my interest in a Deputy Public Defender position with the Offices of the Los Angeles County Public Defender. Given my long-standing interest and varied experiences in indigent criminal defense, I believe that I would be able to make significant contributions to the Public Defender’s vigorous representation of clients.

Through my internships and law school clinics, I have developed an extensive range of lawyering skills, from client communication and trial advocacy to research and writing. My summer experience at your offices exposed me to the issues indigent clients face when initially confronted with the criminal justice system and developed my client communication and relationship-building skills. It also taught me to think quickly and perform strategically in zealously advocating for clients. This year, one of my projects in the Immigrant Rights Clinic is a partnership with the Immigrant Defense Project of the New York State Bar Defenders Association, where I am expanding my research and writing skills by drafting an amicus brief on a criminal-immigration issue. My other Clinic project allows me to develop my trial advocacy skills by representing an immigrant domestic worker and advocate for her wage and hour claims in federal court.

I am passionate about defending indigent and disenfranchised clients by ensuring that their rights are asserted. Working in criminal defense organizations with inspiring practitioners, such as those in your offices, has fueled my desire to continue contributing my energy and skills in this effort. It would be an honor for me to join your ranks as a public defender.

Enclosed are my resume and writing sample. My former supervisors at your office – John Doe and Mary Smith – are available to speak with you regarding my qualifications. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and I am available at your earliest convenience. Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or at the e-mail address noted above.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Alice Lee
Dear Ms. Romano:

I am a third year student at Sojourner Truth School of Law and I am writing to express my interest in a position as a staff attorney with the Criminal Defense Division of the Legal Aid Society. Given my long standing interest and varied experiences in public interest criminal law, I think that I would be well suited to work in Legal Aid’s Criminal Defense Division.

Throughout my law school career, I have gained experience in all aspects of indigent criminal defense, including arraignments, investigations, motion practice and trials. As the enclosed copy of my resume indicates, I worked at New York County Defender Services my 1L summer, where I gained confidence in interviewing and relationship-building with clients. Additionally, I became very comfortable in the courtroom. I further honed my skills during a year-long criminal defense clinic where I had the opportunity to work intensively on several cases. My experience in public defense has been uniquely fulfilling and made me certain that I would pursue this work after law school.

This past summer, for financial reasons, I worked as a summer associate for Arnold & Porter. There I was given the opportunity to spend much of my time on pro bono work. I strengthened my research and writing skills tremendously and co-authored an article that was published in the New York Law Journal. While I was fortunate to receive an offer to work in the firm’s litigation group, my heart has always been in public interest work. My summer in the private sector only made me more eager to begin my public interest career.

Enclosed for your review are my resume, writing sample, references, and responses to the Applicant Questionnaire. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualifications in greater detail. I am available at your earliest convenience. Should you wish to schedule an interview, please contact me at (646) 666-5696.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

John Lendman

Enc.
Mr. Victor Black  
Legal Aid Society of Ohio  
924 Bethel Street  
Cleveland, OH 96813

Dear Mr. Black:

I am a third year law student at Sojourner Truth School of Law and I am interested in being considered for an entry-level position at any of your offices. I will be graduating in May 2007 and plan to take the July Ohio Bar exam. One of your staff attorneys, Lisa Smith, who also graduated from Sojourner Truth, suggested that I write to you. I believe that my broad range of advocacy skills and substantial expertise in poverty law will enable me to contribute to the work of your office.

I grew up in an immigrant family where my father has a chronic illness and my mother is a survivor of cancer. The many challenges we faced as a low-income family struggling with health care issues and debt have made me a passionate and tireless advocate for those who find themselves in similar situations.

During law school I’ve gained experience in direct advocacy for low-income clients, from client interviewing to negotiation to administrative hearings. While interning at Legal Aid, I successfully advocated on behalf of an uninsured domestic worker with over twenty thousand dollars worth of hospital bills to have the hospital reduce her payments. I also successfully represented individual clients at administrative hearings, including a very complex case involving a managed long term care plan. This year in Sojourner Truth’s Immigrant Rights Clinic, I am applying for a discretionary waive on behalf of a client in removal proceedings. I am representing him at his hearing before an immigration judge, briefing a complicated issue of law, and preparing testimony and oral arguments.

I’ve also developed substantial research and writing skills that will enable me to quickly produce the motions and briefs that are needed in a fast-paced legal aid office. For example, during my first summer of law school at Planned Parenthood, I researched and wrote educational materials pertaining to emergency contraception, and at Legal Aid I helped write a Title VI discrimination complaint based on the lack of interpreter services at local hospitals.

I am eager to contribute my knowledge, skills, and experience to the work of your office. I look forward to hearing from you and have included my resume and references as well as a writing sample.

Sincerely,

Fernando Hernandez

Enc.