

Dear Law Student

[by John J. Barnes, Marketing Director]

Making use of your school's Career Center as you conduct your job search may seem like an obvious tip. But the efforts of those that work in these offices often go unnoticed. Whether you are seeking assistance in narrowing the list of your desired practice areas or simply hoping to be pointed in the direction of useful services for resume help or interview improvement, your Career Center can be a valuable weapon in your job search arsenal that you should never ignore.

Normally, we at LawCrossing don't have an opportunity to talk with you directly, but today I'm taking the luxury of doing so and will spend my allotted space talking about an aspect of law school to which you likely give little or no thought.

To start, I should tell you straight out that we hear from law school career counselors on an ongoing basis. This is because many of them have contracts with us to offer LawCrossing free to their students. (You may want to ask your career services department why they don't do the same for you, as this obviously would make us and you very happy, especially if they comply!)

Another reason for our familiarity with these counselors is that we generally interview one of them each week in this space and let them sound off about whatever is on their mind and what's working and not working for them. Whether you indeed read about them is unknown to us, but we hope you have been following along.

Because the school year has just begun at most of the nation's law schools, no one is available to interview, so this week there will be no interview, which is okay with us. It gives us time to reflect on what we've learned so far and what students such as yourself should know and understand.

In talking with these career services folks, we've been surprised from the outset. Many of them obviously feel unappreciated. They tell us how difficult it often is to reach you. One of the problems -- and we have heard this more

than once -- is that the average law student believes that his or her career services office is only interested in those Moot Court and other high-achieving types most likely to get summer internships and full-time work through on-campus job fairs. Everybody else, or 80% of the class, as the story goes, might just as well go hide in a corner and twiddle their thumbs.

The other perception, equally widespread, I think, is that career services offices are only interested in placing their graduates in law firms and that if someone has an interest in, say, public interest law, clerkships, or government work, they are just going to have to conduct such a search independently.

You're already anticipating what I'm about to write, I suspect: namely, that career services counselors vigorously dispute all such allegations. And you're right, they do. What has amused me is that even though career services offices try to serve the whole and not just an elite few, such perceptions continue to linger.

If you've been reading these weekly interviews, you may have noted how career services professionals go to extremes to get the word out. They meet with students early in the morning if these students have daytime jobs. They leave flyers lying about, which students read and then drop off somewhere else. They interrupt evening classes near the end of a session so that they can get their students' undivided attention. They add counselors to focus only on public interest work and seek public and private money to help. It all goes

unnoticed and presumably unappreciated.

Sounds like hard and fruitless work, but if anything, two characteristics that seem to stand out above all others are persistence and hard work, neither of which you likely associate with the career services office at your law school. I urge you to throw away whatever mis- or preconceptions about career services work you now have and take the time to visit your career services people today. Here's what you're likely to find:

- Advice on how to construct a resume
- Advice on how to write a cover letter
- Advice on how to network
- Career counseling that tells you what's likely possible and not possible. (You don't have to agree with the advice you get, but remember, for the most part, your career counselor was once an attorney and has counseled hundreds, if not thousands, of students over the years; and believe it or not, while doing this, he/she has learned valuable lessons that can be passed on to you.)
- You'll get access to special events that will introduce you to leading graduates and other legal figures in the surrounding community and nationally.
- You WILL get help finding clerkships and permanent work even if you're not in the top 20% of your class. Career counselors tell us that the best students don't tend to use them as much because their grades grease the way for them. Contrary to popular opinion, career services personnel actually spend more of their time helping law students just like you.

So how shall I conclude this article? First,



I think the nation's career counselors are underappreciated. They work incredibly long hours on your behalf and seldom receive a word of thanks. Here's some advice: Go see one if only to make them feel better. Tell them they look nice. Who knows? You might even end up getting some valuable help.