



Matthew L. Pascoello, Assistant Director for Marketing & Alumni Counseling, American University, Washington College of Law

[5-17-04 by John J. Barnes]

For the first edition of our new weekly column, Career Counselor's Corner, we spoke with Matthew Pascoello from the Career Services office at American University's Washington College of Law to find out how he got to where he is today and how he goes about helping countless students and alumni each year.

American University's Washington College of Law, located in the nation's capital, graduates on average about 400 JDs each May, and the success of these graduates in both finding jobs and creating satisfying long-term legal careers is helped along considerably by the often selfless efforts of dedicated law school Career Services professionals.

One such professional is American University's Matthew Pascoello, Assistant Director for Marketing & Alumni Counseling. Matthew has worked at American going on seven years. His tasks are numerous and varied, and a considerable portion of his time is devoted to counseling both students and graduate attorneys. In addition, Matthew teaches an Externship Seminar at the law school and serves as a professorial lecturer at AU's School of International Service for a course he developed entitled An Introduction to Law School & the Study of Law.

"On the counseling side, much of my work involves intuitive listening," Matthew explains. "I've learned that it is important from the onset to ask open-ended questions and then metaphorically stand aside and allow the student or alumnus to voice his or her concerns." Matthew continues, "Lawyers and soon-to-be lawyers come to me with a variety of issues, and not all such issues deal with the legal profession, or the student's or alumnus' place in it. For example, the problems of a stay-at-home mom who is seeking to balance re-entry into the workforce with the demands of parenthood differ from those of a seventh-year associate who is not on partnership track and who wonders what to do with the rest of her life, which differ from

the public interest lawyer who loves what he is doing but who can no longer afford the low pay."

"The longer the person talks, the clearer the core issues become. People can easily get emotionally or otherwise side-tracked; and usually I find that I'm of most use when I help clarify someone's thinking and focus it on the essential problem-which does not always announce itself at the beginning of the session."

What are the results of this approach? Matthew explains, "People frequently tell me at the end of a meeting: 'Gee, thanks for helping me sort this out. I now understand what I need to do and how to go about doing it.' I can't tell you how good that makes me feel."

When it comes to experience, Matthew has 'walked the walk' and 'talked the talk.' He graduated magna cum laude from Boston University in 1995, worked for several years in Boston and Manhattan as a paralegal with large national law firms, and studied at the London School of Economics and the National University of Singapore before graduating from Georgetown University Law Center in 1990. He followed that with several years of high-profile work in New York City firms as a corporate and international trade attorney. Matthew then moved to Washington, D.C. to help launch the US start-up offices of a multinational Parisian-based assistance services company. He served as General Counsel for two years, then moved to a management position with a national legal staffing company. In 1997, Matthew joined American University's Washington

College of Law.

In short, any student or attorney seeking advice from Matthew gets someone who has observed, worked in, and reflected upon the legal profession, generating a point of view forged from actual experience over a decade in law firms, in companies and in academia, first as a student and then as an administrator and professor.

"Like many Career Services offices, American University offers its students a full range of services, including self assessment, career guidance, assistance with cover letter and resume writing, mock interviews, networking strategies and salary negotiations," Pascoello states. "Our primary goal is to help students help themselves. You know-the 'teach a person to fish' approach. In that, I mean in addition to creating recruitment programs and promoting the school in order to create employment opportunities for students, we work to educate students on how to create and nurture their own professional opportunities for the sake of both their current and future career advancement."

As if that weren't enough, AU's Career Services office keeps itself quite busy with its 46 career-related program offerings, five major recruitment programs (attracting over 325 employers), regional interview programs in Boston, California and New York, and Career Day for 1Ls program which is held at a hotel and features panels, workshops and a networking lunch enabling hundreds of first year students to interact with the dozens of alumni from a variety of practice areas.



Pascocello takes it even a step further, however: "In addition to teaching the students how to market themselves, we try innovative ways to bring WCL to the attention of the legal marketplace." Enter the "Marketing" component of Pascocello's title. Matthew's unique regional and national marketing initiatives include high profile print advertising campaigns, ads on National Public Radio, and a series of advertisements in The Legal Times, and other legal publications. The results of such efforts have been to increase the number of employers recruiting on-campus by over 100%.

We asked Matthew what he tells students with a low class ranking, especially when the job market is tougher than it is at present. "Well, the first thing I tell them is not to beat themselves over the head with what's already happened. In terms of their academic performance, I like to get them to a place where they are at peace with the past, and excited about the future. Part of this process involves exploring the cause of their academic performance and assessing where they see themselves in the law. The next step may involve readjusting expectations and educating a student about what may and may not be available to them at this particular stage of his or her career. Once we've established these fundamentals, it's a bit easier to devise a practical and effective job search strategy that they feel vested in."

So now you have a sense of Matthew Pascocello, what he does and how he approaches his work. Matthew represents the kind of caring, innovation and dedication typical of Career Services professionals. We are proud to introduce him to you as our first Career Services Star.