SUMMER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

GOVERNMENT

A range of federal, state and local government agencies offer paid and volunteer summer internships. Most first-year students work as volunteers. Each year, numerous students will work with prosecutors and public defenders, both state and federal. Additionally, many 1Ls are successful in obtaining summer placements with federal and state agencies. All of these opportunities exist throughout the country – carefully consider where you want to be, where you can afford to be if accepting an unpaid position, and where your credentials might find the most success. Resources for existing positions are collected on OCP's website; direct applications to agencies and offices may be prepared by compiling a list of target agencies using the Yellow Book series. Students seeking government positions should consider attending the Government and Public Interest Job Fair that will take place in February.

JUDICIAL

Judicial internships in state and federal courts are a great opportunity for first-year students to develop research and writing skills, to network with practitioners in their preferred geographic location, and to observe court room proceedings. Applications are typically made by sending a resume directly; contact information for individual judges can be found in the Judicial Yellow Book, The American Bench and in Symplicity's clerkship module (federal and state appellate courts only). The Judicial Clerkship page of the OCP website is geared to students applying for post-graduate positions, but includes information on alumni in the judiciary as well as judges for whom alumni have worked as law clerks.

PUBLIC INTEREST

Public interest employers are known for providing students with meaningful legal work. In addition to gaining valuable experience, students often have direct contact with lower- and middle-income clients, or a role in policy formation or implementation. Almost all of the positions for first-year law students are unpaid. Students seeking public interest positions should consider attending the Government and Public Interest Job Fair that will take place in February.

ACADEMIC / RESEARCH

Some law school professors hire research assistants during the summer. Typical responsibilities include conducting legal research and assisting in writing and reviewing scholarly articles for publication. If you are interested in working for a particular professor, contact that professor to inquire as to whether positions are available; some professors post research positions in Symplicity.
CORPORATIONS

If you are interested in a career as in-house counsel, your 1L summer is the perfect time to investigate this option. Even though most in-house law departments fill permanent positions with experienced lawyers rather than new graduates, many take summer interns. These positions will not always be posted or advertised; contact the legal department of any company in which you’re interested and make inquiries. Generally, you should apply for these positions January – May.

PRIVATE PRACTICE

Working for a law firm or solo practitioner can be a great way to gain hands-on experience. Be aware, however, that each position is different, and the range of responsibilities given to law students varies widely. Although legal research is the most common task, paralegal and clerical responsibilities may also be assigned. The best experiences provide meaningful, substantive assignments.

Opportunities for first-year students in large law firms are extremely limited. The few large firms that have a first-year summer associate program generally begin to accept applications from 1Ls on December 1, with the positions usually filled in January and February after first semester grades are reported. That said, it’s not unheard of for a student to receive a summer offer based upon the reputation of their law school, the reputation of their undergraduate institution and their undergraduate GPA. The NALP First-Year Hiring Index, which lists member firms that typically hire first-year summer associates, is available at www.nalpdirectory.com (click on "Advanced Search", choose the 1L criteria from the "Organization that Hire" field, along with any other criteria you desire, and click the "Search" button).

If you’re determined to land a position in private practice, consider cities that are regional rather than national centers, smaller cities and towns. You should also broaden your search to include small to mid-sized firms. Some firms interview on campus during the winter; others invite applications by posting position announcements on Symplicity. You can apply for a summer positions with a firm that is not recruiting on campus by submitting a cover letter and resume directly. As a general rule, the smaller the firm, the later in the year potential summer hires are considered.

Thinking ahead to next year: Summer law firm positions for 2Ls, which may lead to permanent employment, are the focus of fall On-Campus Interviewing (OCI). Large law firms throughout the country begin recruiting second-year students in August and extend offers of employment throughout the semester. Positions with a large law firm are extremely competitive – they may recruit at only a limited list of schools, or consider only those candidates with top grades. First-year students whose credentials match large firm requirements (good grades, exceptional extracurricular activities, etc.) should definitely prepare themselves over the summer to participate in OCI during their second year. As such, 1Ls should attend the several résumé and cover letter writing, interview techniques and practice area programs sponsored by Career Planning. Throughout the summer and in early August, all returning students will receive information about OCI – read your email regularly.
Summer positions are also available with small and mid-size firms. Some of these firms will come to OCI, and others will post openings in Symplicity. Many small and mid-size firms will not post a position and rely on students seeking out positions directly with the firm. Many students will obtain law clerk positions by working through personal and family contacts.