Dear 1L,

I am not sure if you have heard—the legal job market is still tough for law schools graduates. The good news is that this should be old news to you now. As a newly minted law student, you entered the doors of your distinguished institution fully aware of the challenges that lie ahead. This is great because knowledge is power. The bad news is that there is no immediate end in sight. The American Bar Association has recently reported that unemployment among recent law school graduates has climbed steadily in recent years, even as the overall jobless rate has declined. Nine months after earning law degrees, the unemployment rate of the class of 2013 was 11.2 percent, up from 10.6 percent for the class of 2012, and 9.2 percent for 2011 law school graduates.

However, there is still light at the end of the tunnel because there is still a potentially big payoff for earning a law degree, as many large and medium sized firms pay first-year associates $100,000 per year or more. The catch, however, is that there are simply fewer of those jobs around.¹

So, needless to say, it is more important than ever that during your 1L year you are aware of what resources are available and how to strategically utilize them to meet your future goals. The most obvious place to start is your Career Services Office (CSO), where talented individuals are paid to help you navigate the legal job market. However, despite this formal role of your CSO, “many students and alumni are not aware of how to best utilize the resource provided by their school.” And to be honest, many law school CSOs do not do the best job of marketing the services they have to offer. This oversight on both sides can be critical, for the relationships you make with the individuals in your CSO can be essential to your job search success.

So where should you start? Below are five ways to utilize your CSO and maximize its resources:

1. **Individual Initiative:** I think the first misnomer about the CSO is that it is there to find you a job. Not true—your CSO provides the resources for you to find a job and a place to candidly discuss your future career. But you have to make the time—take a break from the library and put down your venti latte for 30 minutes or so a week, and go talk to your CSO counselors about their resources and programs. Then, actually set aside time to participate in them. Have the counselors review your resume. Also, participate in mock interviews, review any career databases they have, keep up with current trends in the industry, or draft cover letters. Get familiar with these parts of the job search process when you have lots of help. Plus, everyone likes a self-starter so if there is a fellowship or internship that comes across their desk, you will be the first person they think of.

2. **Alumni Connections:** Alumni networking is the most untapped job source by law students. Your school’s alumni are ready and willing to talk to eager law students about their careers. If you want to work in a particular state or industry, go to your CSO to get alumni contacts and set up lunches and coffees and informational interviews.
3. **Networking Events:** Class schedule and study schedule permitting, attend these networking events but go with an agenda; learn who is attending and what information you want to get out of the event. Most importantly, you will learn the type of networking experiences that are most fruitful for you—are you more productive one-on-one or in a group setting?

4. **Fellowships/Internship Programs:** The advice here is short—find out about these opportunities and apply early if you are interested.

5. **Mentor/Mentee Programs:** Participate in these programs, which are managed by local law firms and bar associations, and act like it is a job interview. It just may be!

Finally, luck is when opportunity meets preparation. So good luck on your job search!

Sincerely,

Danielle Rawls

---

1. www.bostonglobe.com, Jay Fitzgerald, “Deciding whether you should go to law school.”

Author Note: Danielle Rawls is Corporate Litigation Counsel at Green Tree Credit Solutions, as well as a 2012 LCLD Fellow.

*This article originally appeared in the May 2014 issue of the LCLD Connections newsletter. For more information about LCLD, please visit www.lcldnet.org.*