



What's the Secret to Success in Law School and in Life?

LCLD Connections Guest Column

By Brian Parsons

Economists—as well as cynics—will tell you that, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch” (“TNSTAAFL” is the Twitter version). When I was in law school, there were a number of law student associations representing a seemingly endless array of interests and backgrounds. I joined exactly zero of these groups. However, these organizations frequently hosted guest speakers, and they enticed students like me to attend by offering free lunch. These free lunch offers increased my attendance at these functions from zero to nearly 100 percent.

The secret that I unexpectedly learned from attending these free lunches was that the speakers themselves were actually pretty interesting! Articulate and smart to boot! They offered viewpoints and perspectives on topics to which I had never been exposed and, as a result, had expanded my worldview. While I would struggle to tell you even a single concrete thing I learned after dozens of lectures from my Basic Federal Income Taxation class, the topics discussed during these free lunches piqued my interest in a number of different areas and honestly helped to shape how I view myself and my responsibilities as an attorney.

How does this all apply to you, the beginning law student? (Fair question.) Is this all just a strained attempt by the author to talk about himself? (Possibly, but that doesn’t mean there isn’t some truth to what he says.) The secret to success in both law school and in life is that TNSTAAFL is malarkey! It’s undisputed that a free lunch tastes better than if you had actually paid for the same meal. However, along with the free lunch, depending on the circumstances and your openness to the experience, you can actually learn something too!

The good news for all of you LCLD Mentees is that you are already a step ahead of the game. Regardless of whether you’re an outright gunner or a bit of a schemer who happens to also be a relatively high-achiever, you’ve made the fantastic decision to sign up for the LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program. You will be, or already have been, assigned to a Mentor who is volunteering their time to talk to you and provide you with guidance and insight on how to succeed in the legal profession. Some of you come from generations of attorneys; however, for many of you, your LCLD Mentor may be the first practicing attorney that you will have the opportunity to spend significant time with.

As with most things in life, you’ll likely get out of your relationship with your Mentor what you put into it. While not exhaustive, here are a few ideas on topics to discuss with your Mentor and areas where they may be able to provide assistance:

- 1. Academic Success:** Your most important job as a law student is to do well in law school. Your Mentor can likely offer practical advice on what it takes to survive the academic challenges you are about to face. But do you think it might also be helpful to have a practicing attorney look over your written work? You'll never know until you ask!
- 2. Professional Development:** Just being good at taking tests is no guarantee that you will be able to transition into a successful legal career. When looking for a job, *who* you know is often as important as *what* you know. Ask your Mentor if they know other attorneys in the practice areas that interest you and whether they might be willing to put you in touch with them.
- 3. Your Sanity:** If nothing else, your first year of law school is likely to be intellectually and emotionally draining. Your Mentor can provide a safe environment to express concerns and ask questions.

Best of all, your Mentor is a practicing attorney who will likely take pity on your precarious financial position as a law student and pick up the check. Who says there's no such thing as a free lunch? If you play your cards right, you can get a free lunch *and* receive insight and guidance on how to succeed in law school and beyond.

Author Note: Brian Parsons is an attorney at Macy's, Inc. and an LCLD Mentor.

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