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Employment Search Handbook: A Guide for Recent Graduates

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Introduction

Congratulations on your graduation! You are joining the ranks of a very distinguished, successful and involved group of alumni from the University of Richmond School of Law.

At the Career Development Office (CDO) we are very excited about your accomplishments, and are here to assist you in this next stage of your employment search. The services available to you as a law student continue to be available to you as alumni: individualized advising appointments, review of employment documents, mock interviews and more. We are here to help you in any way that we can.

The guide below provides some helpful information for your employment search, but we hope you will use it in conjunction with individual advising at the CDO. Please call, email or set up an appointment to speak with an advisor who will help you move your employment search forward.

Career Development Resources > Advising

The staff and resources of the CDO will continue to be available to you as you make transitions throughout your career. The CDO alumni advisor can help you develop an employment search strategy, review job search correspondence, provide advice on interviews and job offers and direct you to various career-related resources.

Keep us informed as your employment search focus changes, as this will prompt us to identify new resources or approaches to guide you. Please also let the CDO know when you secure employment so that we can celebrate your success.

To schedule an advising appointment, you may log into [Simplicity](#) or contact the CDO by phone (804-289-8638) or [email](#).

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Career Development Resources > Symplicity

Employment opportunities targeted for recent graduates will be posted in Symplicity as employers contact the CDO or as CDO staff discover such openings. Think about setting up a search agent below to help keep track of positions you might be interested in. However, be sure to still consistently login to Symplicity to review listings. Sometimes the search agents will not alert you to all potential opportunities.

Search Agents

Job search agents will alert you when there are new jobs posted to the system that meet specific criteria that you have set. You can have updates sent to you as often as every day, week, etc.

Setting it up

The first step in creating a search agent is to start with an Advanced Search. Click on "Job Opportunities" on the navigation bar, then on the "Advanced Search" tab. The top field is Search Agents. Check "Save as" and give your agent a label. Select your search criteria and submit. A great way to use search agents is to search for all jobs in particular locations.

Scheduling Agents

Once you have created a search agent, it will now show up on the Search Agents page (Jobs/Search Agents tab). You can enable it to run on a schedule by clicking on the "Search Agents" tab. Select your Search Agent Label and click "Schedule." Then click "Enabled - Yes", and set a Period and a Multiple to set up a scheduled search. The Period and Multiple determine how frequently a Search Agent runs. (Example: Period=month, Multiple=2, Agent will be run every 2 months.) A Search Agent runs a scheduled search automatically and then emails the results of the query to you.

Using Agents as a Saved Search

Search Agents are basically a saved Advanced Search that you can run at any time. So rather than waiting for an email notification of a new job, or performing a search for jobs by selecting criteria each time – just go to Jobs on the navigation bar and the Search Agent tab – click on the name of the agent you have set up and hit the "run" button. You will get real-time results based on the agent's criteria.

Maintaining Your Agents

From the Search Agent page you not only set up how often it is run, but you can edit or delete an agent. It is recommended that you review and update your agents periodically because job options may change from time to time.

Tips for Using the Key Word Field

- Please note that keyword search matches whole words by default.
- To get partial matches, add an asterisk to your search term (i.e. manage*).
- To exclude results which include certain words, prepend them with a minus (i.e. manage* -weather).
- To search for specific phrases, use double quotes (i.e. "store manager").
- Search terms shorter than 3 characters and some common words are ignored, except in "phrase" searches, where some words may be shorter.

Career Development Resources > Job Postings

In addition to checking Symplicity regularly, there are a number of websites that post job openings. Searches are free without a subscription unless designated.

Government Employment Websites:

[Brad Traverse](#)

Jobs on Capitol Hill, in government relations, public policy and PR (requires paid subscription)

[Commonwealth of Virginia](#)

Jobs with the Commonwealth of Virginia

[Federal Legal Employment Guide](#)

Guide for applying to federal government positions

[Government Honors & Internship Handbook](#)

Look for honors programs (contact CDO for login credentials)

[USAJOBS](#)

Federal Government positions

[United Nations](#)

Search for careers with the United Nations

Clerkship Employment Websites:

[OSCAR](#)

Federal judicial clerkships (must create free personal login)

[Vermont Clerkship Guide](#)

State judicial clerkships (contact CDO for login credentials)

General Employment Websites:

[ABA Job Center](#)

Search by type of position and location

[Careerbuilder](#)

Search by type of position and location

[Indeed](#)

Search by type of position and location

[Lawjobs](#)

Search by type of position and location

[Law360](#)

Click the "jobs" tab to search by type of position and location

| | |
|--|---|
| LexisNexis | Search job listings (contact CDO for login credentials) |
| The Posse List | Sign up for job alert emails by location |
| Virginia Bar Association Career Center | Search by type of position and location |
| Virginia Lawyers Weekly | Search for legal employment in AZ, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, NY, NC, OK, RI, SC, VA, WI |
| The Washington Post | Search by type of position and location |

Public Interest Employment Websites:

| | |
|---|--|
| Ethical Jobs | Search for positions in charity, corporate social responsibility, family and children (some postings can be viewed only with a paid subscription, others can be viewed without) |
| Human Rights Jobs | Lists positions in human rights in various locations |
| Idealist.org | Search by type of work, degree required and location for public interest positions |
| National Wildlife Federation | Positions in various locations with the NWF |
| National Legal Aid & Defender Association | Search by location for positions in civil legal services, defender organizations, pro bono and public interest organizations, public interest law firms and academia |
| New York State Defenders Association | Search for public defense positions in various locations in New York |
| Policy Jobs | Search for policy positions (some postings can be viewed only with a paid subscription, others can be viewed without) |
| Political Jobs | Search for positions in political parties, public affairs, parliaments and senates worldwide (some postings can be viewed only with a paid subscription, others can be viewed without) |

Specific Specialities Employment Websites:

| | |
|--|--|
| American Immigration Lawyers Association | Search immigration law positions by location |
| The Chronicle of Higher Education | Search for positions mainly in academia, but also beyond |

Reciprocity and Other School Job Listings

[Intercollegiate Job Bank](#) Provides access to job listings from hundreds of law schools across the country (contact CDO for login credentials); search by preferred state to see a list of job postings shared by other participating institutions

Richmond Law alumni who wish to request reciprocity at another law school should submit the [Reciprocity Request Form](#) to our office. The reciprocity policies of most law schools are posted on the [NALP website](#). For reference, see [our reciprocity policy](#) for a feel of how the programs operate.

Tips for Online Applications

There are many common questions about online job applications. Here are some useful tips:

- When asked if the new employer may contact your current employer, answer “No” unless your current position is ending.
- When asked what your salary requirements are, answer “Negotiable.” If the only option is to enter a dollar amount, please contact the CDO for assistance.
- You may try to use some key buzz words or terms from the job description in your resume and cover letter. Sometimes employers using screening software and are looking for particular terms.
- If there is a deadline when the system will stop accepting applications you may complete your application prior to the deadline. However, if applications are accepted until the position is filled, or on a rolling basis, apply as soon as possible.
- Check LinkedIn to see if you have any connections with the organization to which you are applying. Online positions often receive tens or hundreds of applications, and networking is often the key to success.

Getting Started and Getting Organized > Targeting Your Search by Location and Employment Setting

The first step in beginning your post-graduate employment search is to consider what geographic areas and employment settings to target. It is impossible to effectively search for all legal positions in all locations, so you must strategically focus your search. Certainly, your most limiting factor will be your bar membership (or soon-to-be-bar membership), and you also may be guided by the experience already on your resume.

Location

The best search strategy involves focusing on two or three locations. You'll obviously want to target areas in which you are or will be licensed to practice. By choosing more than one target location, you will greatly expand the reach of your search. At the same time, by choosing only a few locations, you will be able to articulate a connection to the area and concentrate your searching and networking efforts.

Clearly there are also circumstances in which you must be in a particular area (family needs, etc.) and it is acceptable to focus your search on that one location. In this situation, be sure to consider nearby suburbs or towns to which you could make a short drive (i.e. for Richmond: Midlothian, Chesterfield, Goochland, etc.).

Employment Setting

Once you have chosen a few geographic areas within which to search for positions, you will need to consider what type of employment setting you desire. Think about whether you want to work for a private firm, the government, a non-profit, a corporation, or find a position outside of traditional practice. Do you have a preference on size of employer, or type of practice? Be careful not to be too specific with what your needs are. You'll want to narrow the universe of jobs to which you are applying, but you do not want to narrow that universe so much that you miss opportunities. Consider also the experience currently on your resume, so that you are choosing a setting in which you can market either that experience or your demonstrated desire for that setting.

Getting Started and Getting Organized > Tracking Your Search and Networking

The employment search process can be overwhelming, so it is important to stay organized and focused. Do so by keeping a detailed account of positions you have applied to or will apply to, as well as your outreach to various networking contacts. The CDO recommends that you use whatever organizational and time management tools are most effective for you to track this information, whether that is a 3-ring notebook with tabs, an Excel spreadsheet, or task and contact tracking in Outlook.

As a basic template, develop a chart to maintain your research and communication with networking contacts and target employers:

- Contact Name
- Contact Email
- Contact Phone
- Employer Name
- Employer Address
- Practice

- Initial Outreach Date; Method
- Follow-Up Outreach Date; Method
- Last Contact Date
- Next Steps
- Next Contact Date
- Personal Facts
- Notes

Setting up such a [tracking document](#) can be time-consuming in the beginning, but that effort on the front end will be worthwhile as you stay on top of deadlines and feel in control of your growing professional network. If you are targeting more than one practice area or more than one geographic area, you may want to create separate employment search tracking documents for each search.

Employment Application Materials > Resume Updates (Before and After Bar Admission)

Update Your Resume

After graduation and subsequent bar exam related events, your resume will need to be updated to reflect your status changes. Do not forget to make the updates suggested below! To an employer, there is a difference between a current student, recent graduate, bar taker and bar passer. You want to make sure you are showcasing these accomplishments and that your resume is current and up to date.

Switch from Candidate to Graduate

Include degree name and graduation date. Example: “*Juris Doctor, May 2017.*” Italicize degree names. Note that the degree for which you are studying is a juris doctor, not a juris doctorate. Be sure to include any honors you received. Example: “*Juris Doctor, cum laude, May 2017.*” Also italicize honors designations.

Bar Admissions

After taking the bar exam, you may note this accomplishment in a separate section of your resume entitled “Bar Memberships and Associations”. Alumni who are admitted to practice in certain courts may include that information as well. See the examples below to find the one that most appropriately reflects your status.

Examples

Sat for [State] Bar Examination, July 2017. Awaiting results.

OR

Passed July 2017 [State] Bar Exam. Will be admitted [date] OR Admission pending.

OR

Licensed in [State], [month] 2017 (this may not be appropriate in all jurisdictions if you are pending a formal admission ceremony)

OR

Admitted to practice in [State], [month] 2017

OR

Admitted to practice in Virginia; Eastern District of Virginia

Employment Application Materials > Cover Letter Guide and Samples

After graduation and bar passage, your cover letter will need to be updated in addition to your resume. Be sure to focus on the opening paragraph, noting that you recently graduated from University of Richmond School of Law, and alerting the employer if you are licensed in their jurisdiction.

You can use this [template](#) to help you draft an updated cover letter. Please also send any cover letter drafts to the alumni advisor in the CDO for review.

Employment Application Materials > Grade Lists vs. Transcripts

Please see this [template](#) for how to create a grade list. Generally, this unofficial list is acceptable until an employment offer is made, at which point the employer may wish to see an official transcript. To obtain an official transcript, visit <http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/transcript.html>.

Temporary Positions

Temporary full-time or part-time contract positions allow recent graduates to work for an agency that has contracted with a larger law firm to complete a document review project for the firm. You are employed by the agency directly, and the project can last anywhere from several days to several years. Some positions require a J.D. only, and therefore allow a recent graduate to work while awaiting bar results.

These positions have both pros and cons. Initially, they provide income while you are looking for permanent employment. However, the work is often short term and inconsistent. Also, there is sometimes a perception by employers that candidates who have done contract work for an extended duration are less desirable. Be certain if you accept a contract position that you are not sacrificing your permanent employment search. Your permanent search (including networking, document creating and editing, and job applications) must come first.

Most traditional permanent placement search firms and legal recruiters do not work with recent graduates. Legal recruiters are looking to hire lateral associates for their firm clients. This is because firms invest a great deal of time and money in their own law school recruiting programs, and are using the recruiter for the limited purpose of finding an experienced associate. Recruiters earn their fees by placing new attorneys, and generally have a large applicant pool of lateral attorneys contacting them for placement.

Networking > Informational Interviewing

Since networking is an integral part of your employment search, informational interviews should be an aspect of your overall career strategy. See this [guide](#) for further details on informational interviews and how to go about them.

Networking > Richmond Law Alumni Activities

Attend a University of Richmond alumni networking event in your area to meet other recent graduates from the law school, business school, leadership school, and arts & sciences.

Click [here](#) to view a calendar of law school alumni events and update your contact information.

Don't see an event in your area? Check out this [calendar](#), featuring general University of Richmond alumni events.

Networking > Bar Association and Professional Organizations

Attending bar association events is the best way to expand your professional network, learn about possible employment opportunities, develop a practice expertise, and socialize with other attorneys in your desired practice area. Many local and statewide bar associations will welcome recent graduates and may offer free or discounted membership in your first year of practice.

See [this](#) website for a listing of local bar associations throughout Virginia. Other states have similar compilations, typically on their state bar's website.

Take advantage of continuing legal education (CLE) programs, volunteer and pro bono projects, leadership activities and social events for local, statewide and specialty bar associations and their practice sections.

Networking > LinkedIn and Social Media

Review and audit your online presence. Remove inappropriate content from your Facebook profile, Twitter feed, and other social media sites. Adjust your privacy settings to control what potential employers can view about you online. Conduct an internet search for yourself and clean up entries that could cause prospective employers to have an unprofessional impression of you.

Be sure to create a LinkedIn Profile. Use a professional looking photo, and add connections. Include your educational and employment background. Keep up to date with your connections, and check job postings.

For more information about using LinkedIn and other social media in your job search, click on [NALP E-Guides](#).

Handling Interviews and Job Offers > Interview Guide

One of the most exciting aspects of your employment search will be interviewing. This is the time to prove to an employer that you are the best candidate for the position. As exciting as it is, interviewing also can be stressful.

The CDO can help prepare you to interview successfully. We offer video-taped mock interview sessions, which are invaluable in preparing you for a real interview. Your career advisor will work with you to anticipate interview questions and the best answers, reduce any verbal or physical tics and decide on thoughtful questions to ask.

Also be sure to check out this [interview guide](#) prepared by the CDO for helpful interview tips and pointers.

Lastly, when you are at the interview stage, be sure to alert your references that they may be contacted by X employer, because you are currently interviewing there.

Handling Interviews and Job Offers > Negotiating Salary

Once you receive a job offer, it is important to consider several factors in accepting the position.

- Will you be practicing in an area of law that interests you?
- Will you have passion for the organization's mission and clients?
- Will you be fairly compensated for your level of work and responsibility?
- Will you be expected to generate your own clients?
- Will you be offered business development or professional skills training?
- Will you receive bonuses based on merit, results or hours?

- Will you be able to live comfortably in that location at that salary with your school loan debt?

Additional compensation considerations:

- When will your performance be reviewed? Will you be eligible for a raise at that time?
- Will mandatory and voluntary bar memberships be paid for by the prospective employer?
- What is the benefits package? What are your financial contributions to benefits?

Try to delay salary negotiations until you have received a solid offer. Research the appropriate salary range for the type of employer, organization size, geographic location and benefits package given. If you can, let the employer lead with offering a number, which you can then negotiate up if appropriate.

Recent graduates are welcome to borrow resources from the CDO library in determining an appropriate salary range including Job and J.D.s (NALP publication found in CDO) or go online to the [Robert Half Legal Salary Calculator](#).

Develop a clear understanding of compensation, benefits and expectations before accepting a new position.

Remember, the CDO is here to support and help you throughout this process. This post-graduate employment guide is meant to help you get started on your post-graduate employment search, but do not forget about the resources in the office. Please contact us with any questions, issues, or concerns, and make an appointment to come in for individual advising. Don't forget to call us with your good news too! We look forward to hearing about your new adventures.