Intellectual Property law is broad - broader than you may think. There is general overlap between litigation and transactional skills that are transferable to other areas. There is also overlap with Labor and Employment Law, Antitrust, contracts, and more, when you look through all the multi-faceted layers of IP law.

You can work in IP and be a technical engineer, a fully transactional lawyer, a fully litigation lawyer, and more. There is not one specific type of person that fits the mold of an IP lawyer. You need a technical background to prosecute patents, but most other areas of IP law do not require a technical background. As one student noted, “it might be helpful to have a technical background to work as a patent or copyright prosecutor but it might be helpful to have a more interpersonal skill-focused background working as a litigator in trade secret or patent infringement cases.”

The lawyers at the dinners recommended experiential courses in addition to doctrinal IP and business law courses if you want to be an IP lawyer. They recommended Contract Drafting, IP Drafting, and the IP and Transactional Law clinic specifically. Hands-on experience is important, whether it's through a firm, a clinic, or pro-bono work; understanding the type of clients you will be working with and their understanding of the law coming in allows you to better serve them.

Richmond has a handful of small firms that do IP law. The larger law firms also have lawyers in this practice area. It can still be tough to grow an IP practice in a smaller city like Richmond. You will have to think hard about business development.

Explaining is half the battle in IP law--learning (or remembering) that you're working with non-lawyers who need a plain English explanation that still covers the legal issues they're facing is a huge step in effective representation. Sometimes that means telling people what they're doing wrong or what they can't do, and sometimes it means figuring out what they really want to do, but regardless of the context, operating on and explaining through the same lens as the client allows you to discover common misconceptions and better explain, which in turn allows you to better represent.

It is okay to find a specialty in something, but it is also okay to be a generalist. And it is even more okay to not know what you like or what that specialty may be at this point.

Don't be discouraged by being a new, young lawyer. You can start building your network now and this will continue after law school. If you don't get a job in the exact field you want, don't think that you need to ‘put in your work’ before you start working towards expanding your network in a new industry. You can do this as a young lawyer and be very successful.

Finding your way into the practice of Intellectual Property law, and really any field of law that you’re interested in, is not always straightforward. The approach to the field can be indirect. It's all about finding the right experience or opportunity that can lead into the practice you want. If you can't find a job immediately doing what you want, then see if there are jobs with similar skills.

As a practicing attorney you are not limited to asking for help only from attorneys from your firm/company/network. The legal community as a whole aims to help its members learn and develop. If you don’t know how to approach a particular matter at work, you can reach out to attorneys that specialize
in that type of matter, even if you do not know them or they work somewhere else, and they will generally be happy to answer your questions.

- If you are looking to expand your network to help find future career opportunities, you should focus on building a strong relationship with the partners at your firm. One might think it would be better to focus your attention on establishing relationships with clients directly, but when you build strong, authentic relationships with partners, they are the ones who will help you connect with clients and opportunities.

- As a law student, take advantage of the many opportunities and discounts offered to students. In addition to free state/local bar student memberships and free or discounted CLEs, students can often get discounted rates to attend conferences or for earn certifications such as the CIPP/US (Certified Information Privacy Professional).

- Think about how to take notes. Spend 1-2 minutes at the end of each meeting writing down the main points that you want to remember. And think about a strategy for organizing your notes. You don’t want to end up with dozens of legal pads with random notes on them. Use one legal pad per client, for example, so all of your notes about that client are in one place.

- Be intentional about growing your practice and developing your expertise. Attend conferences where you can learn new areas of law and build your network. Subscribe to newsletters that will help you stay up-to-date on new legal developments.

- Don’t be scared of social media. The lawyers recommended using Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok to learn about new practices areas, follow potential clients, and build your own brand.

- Pay close attention to your finances. Live beneath your means, even if all of your friends are spending a lot of money. Be especially careful with big purchases that might tie you to a job you don’t like long-term. One lawyer at the dinner specifically recommended the book *I Will Teach You to be Rich*, as a good primer on personal finance. As one student stated, “Don't buy a Bentley straight out of law school; Pay off your loans and live beneath your means.” Another student noted, “Paying off those loans is important and making sure you take care of that first rather than trying to live the picturesque life now will greatly improve your quality of life down the line.”