

Nurturing the Next Generation:

Best Practices in Hiring and Supervising Law Students and New Attorneys

A. Internships: Recruiting Law Students for Paid and Unpaid Term-Time and Summer Positions

1. **Plan ahead** by deciding:
 - How many interns you need. Don't hire more than you have work for and can supervise.
 - Where to recruit — consider career fairs for efficiency and to achieve a diverse pool.
 - Who will supervise and serve as intern mentors.
 - If you can offer salary, credit, or work study contribution.
 - Interns' office space, keys, parking, telephone, and technology needs, so their workspaces are ready.
2. **Write** an internship job description, including a description of your organization, who you are seeking to hire (i.e., class years, skills, background), and likely projects. Students want to know what they will be doing and they get excited about the details!
3. **Determine hiring timetable** and whether it will be different for 1Ls and 2Ls (1Ls can't apply for summer positions until after December 1).
4. **Train interviewers** to ask smart questions and to avoid such illegal questions as "I like your ring; are you married?"
5. **Plan a low-cost "program" for summer interns.** Ideas:
 - Mock-trial or other group training
 - Brown bag lunches with your attorneys and other local lawyers
 - Social events in the office (e.g., bagel breakfasts)
 - Out-of-office events (outdoor concerts, hikes, softball games, theater, etc.)
6. **Review Student Practice Rules** in your jurisdiction.

B. Internships: Supervising Law Students to Train the Best Lawyers

1. **Welcome the interns!** Meet with each intern individually to discuss mutual goals. Let the interns know what projects are planned and ask them what their goals are (e.g., obtaining writing samples, watching courtroom proceedings, interacting with clients). Take them on a tour of your office and introduce them to all staff. Show them their workspaces. Follow the orientation with a reception for your staff and interns to meet and mingle.
2. **Realize that many interns need to obtain a writing sample** and try to plan projects accordingly.
3. **Supply background reading** so students understand your organization and its work.
4. **Teach about ethical issues** regarding confidentiality, conflicts of interest, etc.
5. **Mentor** by inviting interns to court appearances, client interviews, coalition meetings, and office meetings. Interns want to learn from seeing the "real work" lawyers do!
6. **Assign enough challenging work to keep interns busy, and assign a variety of tasks.** Try to assign ongoing projects as well as day-to-day tasks. If possible, have each intern follow a specific case. Interns can research novel legal issues; conduct intake; draft questions for depositions, hearings, and trials; draft pleadings and briefs; interview witnesses (or observe interviews and depositions); prepare exhibits; attend hearings; speak on the record; and "second chair" trials.
7. **Provide samples** of prior memos, motions, briefs and pleadings.
8. **Communicate deadlines** and formats for projects.

9. **Ask interns to give a live presentation** of their research before other attorneys or relevant audiences.
10. **Give students credit** for the work they performed by including their name on briefs, memos, letters, and other work. (A footnote acknowledging their contribution is also appreciated.)
11. **Provide feedback** on research, analysis, writing, oral skills, and interpersonal skills. **The most common complaint of interns is lack of feedback!** Provide **written feedback** on at least one piece of writing.
12. **Talk to interns** about their experiences. A mid-summer (or mid-semester) evaluation allows for mid-course corrections, which benefits interns and employers, and exit interviews allow for two-way conversations about the full experience.
13. **Forms:** Be certain to draft and sign necessary forms required by the law school in a timely fashion.
14. **Invite interns** to see the balanced lives public interest attorneys lead by hosting social events. One or two social events — even a simple one like a Sunday brunch at a lawyer’s home — are greatly appreciated by students. Remember, they are being courted by big firms touting the “big firm” lifestyle. This is a good time to show students that public interest lawyers lead fulfilling and fun lives!
15. **Nurture future public interest lawyers** by serving as strong references for your interns!

**Spread the word! Use PSLawNet —
the free “one-stop source” for public
service law jobs — to advertise
for interns and attorneys.**

www.pslawnet.org

C. Entry-Level Attorneys: Recruiting to Build the Best Organization

1. **Consider qualifications** carefully, including the possibility of hiring without bar membership — bar membership requirements limit your pool of candidates.
2. **Write a detailed job description**, including a description of your organization, the qualifications needed in a successful applicant (i.e., skills, background, language proficiencies, clinical experience, journal experience, etc.), and the job itself. Provide salary information; students need to know if they can afford the job. Consider providing benefits as an alternative means of compensation when salaries are low — such as vacation days, telecommuting opportunities, loan repayment, and sabbaticals.
3. **Determine timetable** for hiring and participants in the process. Who will screen initial applications and who will interview? How many rounds of interviews will you conduct? Who makes the final decision?
4. **Train interviewers** to ask smart questions and to avoid illegal questions such as, “What an interesting last name. Where are you from?” Consider whether hypothetical questions will be useful.
5. **Try to make offers early** so you can “compete” with other organizations that hire on an early timetable.
6. **Be prepared** for a candidate to reject your offer. Students must apply for multiple jobs, so be prepared to extend offers to additional candidates and expand your search if necessary.

NOTE: See also the ABA Standards Regarding Field Placement Programs.



Suite 1110
1025 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-835-1001
www.nalp.org
www.pslawnet.org