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# Widener law Career Connection

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A publication of the Career Development Office at Widener Law

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*We are pleased to feature the following article by Jennifer L. Miller, Esquire, a 1994 graduate of Widener University School of Law. Ms. Miller is a partner in the Business & Finance Department of Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP in Philadelphia, PA. She concentrates her practice in the areas of securities, corporate financing (public and private), strategic alliances, pharmaceutical and biotechnology licensing, technology transfer, mergers and acquisitions, general corporate law, and corporate governance. We are confident that her perspective on big firms and her insider's tips will help you put your best foot forward!*

## Is a Big Firm for You?

by Jennifer Miller, Esq.

Big law firms provide a premier environment in which to learn your craft. You will work with and learn from some of the best in the business. Not only is it an extraordinary learning experience to work with lawyers at the top of their game, but working with great lawyers means working with great clients with interesting transactions, litigation matters, and complex legal issues. Having the opportunity to do cutting-edge legal work can be routine in a big firm with a national or regional practice. Reading in the media about firm clients you help to advise, the complex litigation settlement you were involved with, or that multi-million dollar deal you helped to close is -- let's face it -- pretty cool. Such experiences can be hard to come by in smaller, locally-focused firms.

After nearly fourteen years at a big firm in Philadelphia, I have enjoyed all of these positive aspects. I have also enjoyed the varied and strong support that a big firm provides in terms of attorney development, with formal training and mentoring programs, CLE in my practice area with national experts from around the country, support staff that go way above and beyond the call of duty, and helpful tools and resources at your fingertips. Finally, I have enjoyed the culture of my firm, one of collegiality, excellence, and a comfortable, team-oriented environment.

Negatives? We do work hard, but I have found that many of my friends working at smaller firms, and even some of those in-house at large and small companies, are working just as hard as I am, some even harder. As you progress in

lawyer in private practice can escape that fate. The trick is to figure out what type of work and environment best suits your personality and lifestyle, and then finding the firm that provides the best fit. For me, practicing law as a corporate and securities attorney at Ballard Spahr has been the perfect match.

Interested? To land a big firm position, you have to understand what they are looking for from the beginning and work toward it. There are the obvious things: good grades, class rank, law journal, and moot court. These are all important, but there are other things that make a good candidate. Did you have a job or a career between college and law school? What activities or community organizations were (and are) you involved with? What was your first summer experience? Even non-paying, non-law-firm jobs during your first year summer can give you the needed edge to get the interview.

Internships with a judge, district attorney, public defender, governmental agency (such as the EPA or SEC), or the law or accounting department of a large company can all be very valuable experiences that can set you apart from other candidates.

Finally, know the process and prepare for it. Big firm jobs after law school are almost exclusively offered to summer associates -- law students who work for the firm during their second summer. Getting that summer associate position involves resume submission and interviews in the fall of your second year (immediately upon arrival). This is a time-consuming process, so expect to be very busy at the beginning of your second year. Work hard on your resume, as it is your first impression. Proofread it many times and have it proof-read by anyone who will agree to do so. It should be completely professional and polished, yet provide some insight to your personality. Prepare for interviews. Buy a great suit that makes you feel confident and speaks professional, think about answers to questions you might be asked, prepare questions you will ask, be prepared to talk about yourself and your experiences, and practice with mock interviews. Do some research for each interview you get (firm websites make this easy). Be careful not to over-prepare -- sounding like a tape recorder with rehearsed answers or like each sentence or question is designed to show off that you looked at the website will backfire. Finally, be sure that you are professional, but always be yourself.

**STANDARDS FOR THE TIMING OF OFFERS AND DECISIONS**

The National Association for Law Placement (NALP) promotes guidelines

concerning the timing and release of offers of employment. Please be aware of and adhere to the following guidelines as you move through the Fall Recruitment season:

**2L/3L Student Response Dates**

If you receive and offer **after September 15** and were not previously employed by the firm making the offer, you have until **December 1<sup>st</sup>** to respond.

If you receive the offer **before September 15** and were previously employed by the firm making the offer, you have until **November 1<sup>st</sup>** to respond.

If you were **not previously employed by the firm** making the offer, you have until **December 1<sup>st</sup>** to respond.

**Holding Offers Open**

You must release offers (e.g., decline to accept offer) in accordance with the following schedule.

Number of offers students may hold:

After September 15.: Five

After October 1: Four

After October 15: Three

After November 1, with employer's consent: Two

After December 1, with employer's consent: One

For a quick summary of the above, point your browser to:

<http://www.nalp.org/content/index.php?pid=28>

For a full summary of the guidelines, point your browser to Part V of the NALP Principles and Standards at:

<http://www.nalp.org/content/index.php?pid=16#part5>

**INTERVIEW POLICY NOTICE:**

**IF YOU HAVE SIGNED UP FOR AN INTERVIEW BUT MUST DECLINE, YOU MUST NOTIFY THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT SOMEONE ELSE MIGHT BE ABLE TO INTERVIEW IN YOUR PLACE.**

**STUDENTS WHO DO NOT NOTIFY OUR OFFICE AT LEAST 24 HOURS PRIOR TO ANY INTERVIEW THAT THEY CANNOT ATTEND THE INTERVIEW SHOULD SEND A LETTER OF APOLOGY TO THE EMPLOYER AND COPY THE CDO.**

**STUDENTS WHO DO NOT ATTEND TWO INTERVIEWS WITHOUT 24 HOURS NOTICE AND WITHOUT GOOD CAUSE FOR MISSING THE INTERVIEW, AND STUDENTS WHO FAIL TO SEND A LETTER OF APOLOGY IF NECESSARY, WILL BE BARRED FROM FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR THAT ACADEMIC YEAR.**

**POLICY REGARDING ACCEPTED OFFERS:**

**“The legal profession embraces strict standards of**

professionalism. The representations lawyers make to the court, other attorneys, and the community are commitments that may be relied upon and should be upheld. In accordance with these standards, it is the policy of Widener University School of Law that students who have accepted offers of employment shall not continue to interview or negotiate with other employers.”

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR  
SUBMITTING PAPERWORK TO  
THE CDO TO EMPLOYERS  
NOT USING SYMPPLICITY  
FOR THE 2007 FALL  
RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

Please follow these five easy steps when submitting paperwork (i.e., cover letter, resume, transcript, writing sample and references) to the Career Development Office (CDO).

(Paper clips, Post-it® and a Xerox machine are available at the CDO for your use).

1. **MAKE SURE** the Employer is requesting Applications from **YOUR** class year (e.g. 2008, 2009) as noted on the **On-Campus and Off-Campus Recruiting Schedules**. *(If you are a 2ED, you may submit to employers requesting paperwork from the Class of 2009 for summer positions.)*
2. **ONLY SUBMIT** application materials that the employer has requested. *All application materials that do not apply will be returned,*

*placed in student file and/or discarded.*

**Cover letters** are not usually necessary when the CDO is submitting paperwork as a group (see schedule for firms requesting cover letters).

**Resume** should be an original printed on resume paper.

**Transcript** need not be sealed. A copy of the “student copy” is sufficient unless otherwise noted by the employer. Obtain a student copy of your transcript from the Registrar’s Office. Allow the Registrar’s Office at least 24-48 hours to process this request. The cost of a student copy transcript is \$2.00.

**Writing Sample** – A Xerox copy of your best Legal Methods paper will suffice. You are allowed to incorporate your professor’s suggestions into your paper prior to submitting it as a writing sample. You will need to obtain permission to use a document prepared for an employer.

**References** – Prepare an Addendum listing the name, title, work address

and work phone of your references. Try to get three references. *Always confirm this information with your references and advise them when you will be interviewing. Follow-up with a courtesy copy of your resume to your references.*

3. **PAPERCLIP “packet”** (*Set of Application Materials*) for each employer and **place a Post-it® note on the front** with the **“NAME OF THE EMPLOYER”** that you are submitting your paperwork.
4. **DROP OFF YOUR PACKET** (no envelopes or folders please) to the Career Development Office any time prior to the deadline. *NOTE: You MUST drop off your packet by the close of business hours or by a time specified by the CDO on the day of the deadline in order to be considered.*
5. **CHECK** the Career Development site on **TWEN**, the CDO Bulletin Board, or on Widener’s website at [www.law.widener.edu/go/recruitment](http://www.law.widener.edu/go/recruitment) for the

latest ON- and OFF-Campus  
Recruitment Schedules.

**REMINDER: SESSION #2  
DEADLINE FOR  
EMPLOYERS USING  
SYMPPLICITY TO  
ADMINISTER FALL OCI IS:**

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15<sup>TH</sup>**

There are only 3 employers listed in this session (2 On-Campus and One Off-Campus). All three are interested in interviewing students from both classes (2008 & 2009).

**They are:**

- 1. Philadelphia District  
Attorney's Office,  
Philadelphia, PA**
- 2. City of Philadelphia Law  
Department, Philadelphia,  
PA**
- 3. Marcello & Kivisto, LLC,  
Carlisle, PA**

**DON'T FORGET TO CHECK  
THE WEB FOR UPDATES TO  
THE SCHEDULES!!!**

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO  
WELCOMING YOU BACK  
ON AUGUST 20<sup>TH</sup>!**