SECTION I

Self-Assessment

SELF-ASSESSMENT

ANSWERS TO SOME COMMON QUESTIONS

What is self-assessment?

Self-assessment is a process involving a set of self-administered tests and activities that will help you ascertain your best skills, attributes, values, goals and needs.

Will self-assessment reveal a list of ideal jobs for me?

Probably not, but self-assessment will help you focus on what your priorities are in the job search process, and will provide you with a much better idea of the kind of work and work environment in which you are likely to find fulfillment. Self-assessment helps even the most insightful law student discover things about him or herself that will aid in the job search process. In addition to helping you focus your job search efforts, self-assessment provides the foundation for the honest enthusiasm that greatly impresses potential employers. If you are confident that a particular job is right for you, you will be more naturally able to sell yourself for the position. Self-assessment is a fascinating, enjoyable process that yields invaluable information.

The best time to begin self-assessment is while you are in law school, preferably sooner rather than later. Many people who are unhappy in their professional lives only conduct self-assessment after they become unhappy. Take charge of your career and do your self-assessment now, before you have committed to any major legal career choices.

How do I do self-assessment?

There are several resources in the Career Development Office and on-line that contain tests and exercises you can do at your convenience. See the below section on self-assessment tools for examples. We also suggest that you answer some of the following questions to ascertain your current interests and goals.

When you are finished, consider meeting with a career counselor to discuss your discoveries and decide how you might best use the information in your job search process.

Work Environment

1. Would you prefer a large office to a small one?
2. Do you function better in a team environment?
3. Do you mind spending your day at your desk, with small breaks?
4. Would you prefer to spread your day equally between the office and court?
5. How do you feel about being in the court?
6. Do you prefer structured training or are you comfortable learning on the job?
7. What level of feedback do you prefer?
8. Are you seeking lots of responsibility early in your career?

Practice Areas

1. What skills do you prefer to use on a daily basis? Writing, researching, negotiating, advocacy?
2. Which classes do you enjoy the most?
3. Do you consider yourself a self-starter?
4. Are you attracted to a cause or a mission?
5. Are you multi-lingual?

6. Do you have a background that includes public service or volunteerism?
7. Are you good with numbers, accounting or calculations?
8. Do you enjoy looking at the "big picture" or digging into the details?
9. Do you desire the "spotlight" or do you prefer to work behind the scenes?
10. Do you have political aspirations or desire to be a public servant?
11. Do you like working with facts and data?
12. Are you comfortable working one on one with people?

Other Considerations

1. Where would you prefer to work? How far are you willing/able to travel for work?
2. What are you family responsibilities? How will you balance work, family, community and peers?
3. What are your current financial obligations? How can you adjust your budget so that you have maximum flexibility in exploring viable career pathways?
4. Have you established a family budget and gathered information concerning typical salaries? Doing so early will greatly assist in your career planning process.

Where do I find these self-assessment tools?

As noted, there are a number of tools and resources in the Career Development Office. Here are some to get you started:

Guerilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams. Walton, Kimm Alayne; Chicago, IL: Harcourt Brace, 2008.

What Color is Your Parachute? 2008 ed., Bolles, Richard N.; Berkley CA: Ten Speed Press, 2007.

What Can You Do With a Law Degree - A Lawyers' Guide to Career Alternatives Inside, Outside, and Around the Law. Arron, Deborah; Seattle, WA: Niche Press, 2003.

"Launch your Career with Self-Assessment Tools", by Kathleen Brady. Originally published in Student Lawyer, March 2009, Vol. 37, No. 7 http://www.abanet.org/lsd/studentlawyer/mar09/brady.shtml

Other recommended reading:
Strengths Finder, Rath, Tom; New York, NY: Gallup Press, 2007