

University of Pittsburgh School of Law
Career Services Office

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THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN “OCI”: Your Fall Job Search

This Handout is designed to give you an overview of the variety of other job alternatives to the Fall on-campus interviewing (“OCI”) program. Regardless of whether you participate in OCI, all students should review this handout and consider these sources of employment in their job searching activities.

I. Initial Thoughts - Keep in mind the following:

- ◆ Generally, OCI is the job search avenue for second-year and third-year students who want a summer and/or post-graduate position with a larger private law firm. While a few small and mid-sized private firms, government agencies, and public interest organizations participate in OCI, the vast majority of participating employers are larger private law firms.
- ◆ The majority of students do not obtain their summer/post-graduate positions through OCI. In typical years, only 15-20% of the students get positions through OCI.
- ◆ The largest, most prestigious private law firms place an extraordinary emphasis on academic performance. Many of these employers will only consider interviewing students with top grades. It is typical for students with high grades and membership on a publication to get the majority of interviews during OCI.
- ◆ OCI is often inaccurately viewed as the principal job search avenue for all students simply because it begins early in the fall semester, seemingly engages so many students, and gives rise to so many related programs and events. In fact, the vast majority of employers do not participate in OCI.
- ◆ Students who do not wish to obtain a summer or permanent position with a larger private law firm should feel comfortable participating in OCI in a limited fashion (e.g., submitting materials for the select number of participating small and mid-sized firms, government agencies, or public interest organizations).
- ◆ No student, regardless of his/her academic performance, should rely solely on OCI to find summer/permanent employment. All students should be simultaneously conducting an independent job search during the fall and spring terms.
- ◆ If you are interested in securing summer/post-graduate employment in cities where Pitt Law gets few, if any, employers to participate in OCI, you will need to aggressively and independently target employers in the cities of interest to you. If you are considering large firms in such cities you should begin the process in the summer (before they begin to interview at other law schools) and discuss your plans with the CSO.
- ◆ There are a variety of equally important, alternative job search avenues for students interested in positions with government agencies, public interest organizations, or small and mid-sized firms.
- ◆ While the fall semester is the primary “hiring season” for larger private firms, it is not necessarily the “hiring season” for many government, public interest, small and mid-sized firms, and other employers. These employers engage in different hiring processes and follow different timelines, namely fall through spring.

II. Job Searching in Small to Mid-Sized Private Firms

The definition of “small to mid-sized private firms” will vary depending upon the location. In general, for a city such as the size of Pittsburgh, this refers to firms with fewer than 50 attorneys. However, it should be noted that different firms define themselves differently as far as size. While some firms of this size may participate in OCI, the majority of these firms will not do so. Due to limited resources, many firms prefer to post positions via [Symblicity](#) throughout the year with students applying directly to the firms rather than interviewing on campus. Also some firms of this size do not like to post positions in an effort to avoid a “flood” of resumes. These firms prefer students to seek them out on their own and send a resume and cover letter to inquire about possible openings.

A. Hiring Timetable

For the majority of small to mid-sized private firms there is no “set” hiring period. These firms hire when they need to hire. This may mean that you will need to make contact in the fall, winter and early spring. Since generally there is no applicable hiring timetable, you should keep abreast of available opportunities as they arise and inquire about possible opportunities with specific firms that interest you beginning in the fall term. Keep in mind, however, that many of these firms may not make decisions until the spring term.

B. Small to Mid-Size Firms Job Search Resources

The CSO maintains a directory listing small to mid-size firms in the Pittsburgh area <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career> and has a variety of resources to assist you with your search for a summer or post-graduate position in a small to mid-sized private law firm:

- ◆ *Choosing Small Choosing Smart: Job Search Strategies for Lawyers in the Small Firm Market* (we also have a video-taped program on this book)
- ◆ *Legal Times Directory of Metro DC Law Offices*
- ◆ *Legal Intelligencer’s Law Firm Directory* (covering Philadelphia/Delaware areas and Southwest and Central New Jersey)
- ◆ Lexis, Westlaw, Martindale-Hubbell databases
- ◆ Pgh. Small/Mid-Size Firm Directory <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/directories/smallfirms>

C. Job Search-Related Programs and Activities

There will be a variety of programs and activities throughout the year at which representatives from small to mid-sized private firms will discuss employment opportunities. Many of these will be panel programs focusing on particular areas of the law. Students should also consider getting involved in student organizations where they will have opportunities to plan events that involve practitioners from these firms.

III. Job Searching For Government Positions

For purposes of this handout, the term “government” encompasses federal, state and local: (i) administrative agencies and offices; (ii) legislative bodies and offices; and (iii) prosecution and defense offices.

A. Government Hiring Processes and Deadlines

Government agencies do not follow a “standard” timetable for hiring. Because there is no defined hiring season it is critical for you to familiarize yourself with the respective hiring processes and applicable deadlines of the agencies that interest you as soon as possible so that you do not miss any deadlines. The materials set forth below, along with the CSO “Government” webpage <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/directories/government> and other materials in the CSO are a good starting point.

While a limited number of government employers may post openings with the CSO, the majority will not so you will need to seek out agencies that are of interest to you to determine their hiring processes. You should begin this process in the summer so that you do not miss any critical deadlines.

A number of government agencies offering “government honors” programs and other government positions have application deadlines in late September and early October. Other government agencies may not begin their hiring until later in the fall or early in the spring semester.

B. Government Job Search Resources

The CSO has a web page dedicated to government opportunities <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/directories/government>. This site provides information along with links to other web sites that will be of assistance to you. The CSO also maintains a variety of government-related resources designed to assist you with your search. Many of the resources are directories that you can use to obtain contact information for sending your cover letters and resumes, while others provide general information about working in a particular sector of the government in law or law-related fields. The majority of the government-related resources are located on the bookshelf in the section labeled “Government.”

Below are some of the resources you can use to begin your government job search:

- ◆ *Federal Yellow Book*
- ◆ *State Yellow Book*
- ◆ *Washington Information Directory*

- ◆ CSO webpage <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/directories/government>

- ◆ The U.S. Government Job Openings (<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>)
- ◆ *The Government Honors & Internship Handbook* www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm (locate current username and password on the Extranet)
- ◆ Register yourself free of charge with PSLawNet www.pslawnet.org. This site will allow you to search for both government and public interest summer and post-graduate opportunities and organizations. Note, there is also a dedicated *Government Careers Page* on PSLawNet
- ◆ The CSO Government/Judicial Clerkship binder (contains postings for government jobs and honors programs that have also been posted in the past)
- ◆ *Opportunities in Public Affairs* www.brubach.com/opawebversion/opa.htm (locate current username and password on the Extranet)
- ◆ Check the “Government Opportunities” Bulletin Board outside the CSO

C. Job Search-Related Programs and Activities

There will be a variety of programs and activities throughout the year at which representatives from government agencies and offices will discuss government opportunities. Students should consider attending the Equal Justice Works Career Fair held each October in Washington, D.C. A large number of government agencies traditionally participate in this fair. Additionally, each fall a Pittsburgh Federal Career Day is held for students in all schools/colleges to meet with representatives from a large number of agencies. Pitt Law is also a member of the Northeast Consortium of Law Schools which hosts a Washington D.C. Interview Day in January of each year. This event is also a good way to obtain interviews with government and public service organizations. Students should also consider getting involved with student organizations that focus on government issues.

IV. Job Searching in Public Interest Organizations

Public interest lawyers engage in a broad range of activities. In general, public interest lawyers tend to represent people who and issues that otherwise might lack meaningful representation in the legal system. For purposes of this handout, the term “public interest organizations” encompasses: (i) non-profit organizations that specialize in the problems of particular constituencies or issues (both client-oriented and policy-oriented organizations); and (ii) legal services and legal aid organizations.

A. Hiring Timetable

1. Summer Positions

There is no standard “hiring season” for public interest organizations. This means that it is critical for you to familiarize yourself with the hiring processes and deadlines for the specific organizations/programs that interest you.

While a very limited number of public interest organizations may participate in OCI and/or be prepared to extend offers for summer employment early in the fall term, most organizations do not begin hiring until the latter part of fall semester or the early part of spring semester. Nevertheless, you should begin the process of identifying organizations in the summer and early fall so that you do not miss any critical deadlines.

2. Post-Graduate Positions

Generally speaking, there are two traditional types of public interest post-graduate positions: post-graduate fellowships and staff attorney positions. Fellowships generally fall into one of several different categories:

- ◆ Fellowships that are actually salary stipends and do not require the applicant to develop a program proposal or secure a sponsoring organization;
- ◆ Fellowships that do require the applicant to develop, in conjunction with a non-profit sponsoring organization, a project that meets the objectives of the particular fellowship;
- ◆ Fellowships that lead to an LL.M. at a sponsoring law school;
- ◆ Fellowships offered by a private firm that enable an entry-level attorney to work primarily or exclusively on public interest or pro bono matters at the firm and then become a “regular” associate at the completion of the fellowship;
- ◆ Fellowships that enable the entry-level attorney to work at a public interest organization for a set term and then join the firm as a more senior associate; or

- ◆ Foundations or Family Funds that will fund an independent project of the applicant's creation.

Fellowship application deadline dates are spread throughout the year, although a number of the more competitive fellowships have application deadline dates early in fall semester. It is very important for you to familiarize yourself with the array of fellowships and their respective hiring processes and application deadline dates. If you have questions please be certain to make an appointment with Mary Thinium thinium@pitt.edu.

With respect to (non-fellowship) post-graduate positions, most public interest organizations hire simply on an as needed basis. You should both keep abreast of available opportunities as they arise and inquire about possible opportunities with specific organizations that interest you.

B. Public Interest Job Search Resources

The CSO maintains a web page dedicated to public interest law <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/directories/publicinterest> and has a variety of public interest-related resources designed to assist you with your search for a summer or post-graduate public interest position. Many of the resources are directories that you can use to identify organizations that may interest you and obtain contact information for sending your cover letters and resumes, while others provide general information about working in a particular public interest practice setting. All of the public interest-related resources are located on the bookshelf in the section titled "Public Interest."

Below are some of the resources you can use to begin your public interest job search:

- ◆ *Serving the Public: A Job Search Guide*
- ◆ *The Comprehensive Fellowship Guide – The Ultimate Resource for Law Students and Lawyers*
- ◆ CSO web page <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/directories/publicinterest>
- ◆ The Equal Justice Works web page www.equaljusticeworks.org
- ◆ Register yourself free of charge with PSLawNet www.pslawnet.org. This site will allow you to search for public interest summer and post-graduate opportunities and organizations.
- ◆ The CSO Public Interest binder (lists postings for public interest jobs and fellowship programs that have also been posted in the past)
- ◆ Check the "Public Interest Opportunities" Bulletin Board outside the CSO

C. Job Search-Related Programs and Activities

There will be a variety of programs and activities throughout the year at which representatives from public interest organizations will discuss public interest opportunities. Students should consider attending the Equal Justice Works Career Fair held each October in Washington, D.C. A large number of public interest organizations traditionally participate in this fair. Pitt Law is also a member of the Northeast Consortium of Law Schools which hosts a Washington D.C. Interview Day in January of each year. This event is also a good way to obtain interviews with public interest organizations. Students should also consider getting involved with student organizations that focus on public interest issues. The Pitt Legal Income Sharing Foundation (PLISF) also raises money each year to give grants to students pursuing public interest work during the summer.

V. Some Final Thoughts

- ◆ Take full advantage of the resources available to you. In particular, schedule an appointment with the CSO to help you think about how best to achieve your career goals and identify and pursue specific opportunities.
- ◆ Identify and talk with faculty, alumni and fellow students who share your interests. Also, utilize the Pitt Law Attorney Networking Directory <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/networking> located on the Extranet to connect with attorneys who are working in practice areas and/or geographic locations of interest to you.
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the variety of career and job search-related resources maintained by the CSO and on the web page.
- ◆ Keep informed. Keep abreast of both opportunities and relevant programs and activities through e-mail, Symplicity postings and the CSO Pitt Law Works Newsletter <http://www.law.pitt.edu/career/plw>.
- ◆ Don't fall into the trap of "comparing" yourself to others and "following the crowd." This is *your* job search and eventually *your* career. Be an independent thinker. Take initiative -- there is no substitute for taking control of your own job search.