



Memorandum

Date: July 1, 2008
To: Norma F. Cirincione
Board Liaison, Experienced Professionals Section
From: Lynne Traverse
Chair, Experienced Professionals Section
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Re: Experienced Professionals Section First Quarter Board Report

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This report describes the initial progress of the new Experienced Professionals Section in the first quarter of the NALP year.

Experienced Professionals Retreat Work Group (Leaders Karen Britton and Carol Sprague)

Through the 2007-2008 efforts of the Engaging Experienced Professionals Work Group (precursor to this Section), Karen Britton had already begun to formulate a stand-alone program/retreat for Experienced Professionals. With a working model of the planned curriculum, the new EP Retreat Work Group met in person during the Section meeting in Toronto. During that session, additional input from the section members added framework to the working model, including time of year and potential locations, and Karen and Carol asked the NALP staff to research properties that might be appropriate for this event. In addition, the Work Group itself also researched properties and located a potential site in Scottsdale, Arizona, which has now submitted a bid proposal for the retreat that is considerably lower than other typical resort locations. Based on this work, a survey is currently underway of the Section membership, the results of which should be available to the Board at this meeting under separate cover. Additional information on the curriculum, site proposal, and budget, is available for the Board's consideration at the July Board Meeting.

To strengthen the retreat concept, and in recognition of increasing budget pressures on the membership, this Work Group made the decision not to proceed with a separate Experienced Professionals seminar during the Annual Education Conference in 2009.

EP/NP Collaboration Work Group (Leaders Joni Peet and William Chamberlain)

The EP/NP Collaboration Work Group also met with interested Section members in Toronto. During the quarter, this group focused on various models for delivering flash mentoring at the Annual Education conference, as well as joint interactions with the Newer Professionals Section.

Flash Mentoring

Additional planning occurred following the Toronto meeting, with the assistance of Brian Lewis, who researched the formats of past conference mentoring programs through members who had created and run those programs (Anne Hensley and Esther Rodriguez to name two). This work culminated in 5 RFP's submitted to the Annual Education Conference Planning Committee. None of these programs adds cost burden to NALP as they are concurrent with other meals and do not require additional food and beverage service. Although we do not at this writing know the decision of the Planning Committee, RFP's included:

1. A roundtable breakfast featuring topic tables during which experienced professionals would be available to new and intermediate professionals to discuss specific and general questions relevant to the profession.
2. An opportunity for those members who wish to sign up for specific groups with whom to attend the Members Celebration Dinner.
3. An experienced professionals mentor program. At registration, newcomers can sign up for an experienced professional conference mentor with the focus being specifically on how to best navigate the conference.
4. Flash Mentoring – at various pre-scheduled times during Conference, members of the Section will volunteer to meet for short, one-on-one 30 minute counseling sessions.
5. On a specific day, a separate lunch area set aside for experienced professionals to network with each other (no topic).

Joint Interactions

We have now connected with Vic Massaglia of the Newer Professionals Section who is delighted to work jointly with the Experienced Professionals Section on hosted topic calls that group has already calendared. Sarah Staup will act as liaison between Vic and this group.

General Conference Proposals

The Experienced Professionals Section has submitted four programming proposals to the Conference Committee. Included in these proposals are two mirroring programs – one from the employer side and one from the school side – featuring panels on the new “chief” positions (employers) and top senior dean positions (schools) to allow intermediate and senior members an opportunity to understand what those jobs entail, career path progressions, etc. The other two programs, at the request of NALP President Mike Gotham, are advanced toolkit sessions on managing multiple/global office staffs.

Bulletin Articles

Three Bulletin articles are currently scheduled from the Experienced Professionals Section. The first, which appears in the July Bulletin, is co-authored by Karen Britton and myself, and describes the new Section's creation and mission. Katie White and Ross Guberman will author an article for an issue in the Spring on “Legends of the Fall” – stories of experienced professionals, their career paths, how they started and the changes they have seen. Finally, Deb Ryerson will author an article in the Spring on the importance of outstanding material hand outs in programming.

Environmental Scanning

On Tuesday, July 1st, the Section engaged in its first conference call to discuss environmental scanning. Present on that call were eight employer representatives, nine law school representatives, and Jeanne Svikhart of the Department of Justice. In addition, several Section members who could not participate in the conference call wrote email comments, which are also included here.

Economic Downturn

Regarding the impact on summer programs from the economic downturn, most markets across the country report their summer associates are “behaving better” generally (although there are exceptions), and the class seems “more civilized.” One employer reports attitudes have gone from “what do you have to offer me” to “let me tell you why I’m the right candidate for your firm.” Employers believe the students are aware of the news and blogs, but aren’t specifically expressing concerns. East Coast markets report they do not notice much change in their summer class attitudes.

One member suggested she is concerned about this downturn being potentially worse than in the tech bubble (which was more localized), and more troubling than in the early ‘90’s due to the dollar being down globally. A comment was made that this generation is more optimistic than those experiencing previous downturns which may explain the lack of concern displayed within summer classes.

Those school representatives who are hearing from students report it is primarily 3Ls and alumni who are contacting them. 3Ls are asking if they can sign up early and more actively for OCI and any job fair opportunities (even without having heard offer decisions), and alumni are exploring job opportunities prior to any specific news of lay offs at their firms.

Employers are taking the long view and trying not to overreact, but believe that summer offer decisions could be tougher this year and less forgiving. That being said, they consistently report Fall hiring will be at the same or only slightly smaller levels.

On another note, school representatives report a dramatic upswing in the number of students interested in splitting their summers. Firms suggested this might lead to frustration since more and more employers have decided not to accept splits other than returns from previous summers. One school also reported a large up-tick in Federal clerkship interest from returning 3Ls who may not have considered clerking previously.

Employers overall report that business in some specific practice areas is “way down”, but that others are up and very busy nationally, in the far East, and in Europe. One large firm reported that staff raises will not be a “given” this year. Associate attrition has slowed.

Schools report levels of OCI requests are remaining constant or slightly increased, with several reporting a rise in small-to-mid-level employers as well as more Federal agencies coming on campus.

Part V

The discussion with our experienced professionals on the new Part V timing guidelines reflected an elevated level of apprehension. As the date for implementation approaches, several members express increasing concerns about whether hiring committees (who can be cavalier at times) will cooperate by buying in, or push back as star candidates come up for offer expiration. If automatic extensions are routinely offered or, worse, routinely offered to specific schools, the blogs will pick it up immediately. Several schools are worried that indiscriminant exceptions to the rules will destroy the structure of the system.

Jeanne Svikhart reminded the group that the DOJ has moved their entire process up two weeks to accommodate the new timing, but is extremely concerned about most of the other Federal agencies who have longer decision tracks. She encourages NALP to keep close tabs on what happens in the public sector.

With regard to communications between schools and their students, the plans vary on how much assistance schools are willing (or able) to extend to students. Many schools feel students must take ownership of their own process, and should be tracking their required response dates on their own. Most employers plan to continually reach out to their offerees, and do not feel students will be at a loss to retain their deadline dates.

Going Forward

During the first quarter, the Experienced Professionals Section necessarily concentrated on the required charges which were extremely time sensitive in nature (Retreat proposal, Conference RFP's, NP liaison start up, etc.). This quarter, in addition to continuing with those efforts, we are seeking leadership for the EP Recognition, Engagement, Involvement Work Group (although some tasks have already been accomplished generally), and the Talent and Interest Give Back Project Work Group. Once those leaders are in place, the Section will actively proceed. Additionally, a leader has now been found, after repeated requests, for the Writers Work Group. Again, we have accomplished aspects of this charge in our initial efforts, but now Deb Ryerson will work to create an appropriate project for this Work Group.

Conclusion

It is my privilege to serve as the first Chair of the Experienced Professionals Section. I am confident that this group will truly make a difference in engaging our senior membership and create new and rewarding activities and roles for them to enjoy, while at the same time supporting our newer professionals with the wisdom of their experience.

Submitted for your approval,

Lynne Traverse
Chair, Experienced Professionals Section

cc: Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director