

## Career Services Shifts Focus to Employer Outreach, Job Placement



(left) First-year law students Jeanette Stecker and Martin Trimiew discuss job search strategies with Jeffrey Chapman, center, a partner at Vinson & Elkins LLP in Dallas.

“This, I believe, is not only rare for law school career service offices nationwide, but also absolutely necessary—the *sine qua non*, if you will—for a law school with students of our caliber.”

Kent Syverud, dean and the Ethan A.H. Shepley University Professor, notes: “Our emphasis on career placement is essential to ensuring that our students have access to career options

While most law schools’ career services focus on individual professional development and employment counseling, Washington University Law has introduced a new and innovative approach to job placement—one that relies heavily on proactive employer outreach and the assistance of alumni.

Although still assisting students with fine-tuning résumés, cover letters, and interviewing skills, Washington University Law is shifting its main focus to better suit the current job market and needs of legal employers.

“I am told weekly by hiring managers just how much our students excel in professional acuity and acumen,” says Michael Spivey, assistant dean for career services, strategy, and marketing. “We are now complementing our programs for building these professional traits and self-promotional skills with actively lining up specific employers with specific students.

that are in line with other top-tier law schools. We recruited Dean Spivey to assist us with this effort, and I am confident that he is the right person to take on this challenge.”

The law school’s Career Services Office (CSO) is establishing broad networks of alumni and employers, creating specific marketing materials to help establish worldwide brand recognition of the school and its students, and developing software for a national job bank.

“We have personally contacted close to 1,200 small- to mid-sized firms in 10 cities of strategic and geographic relevance and invited them to participate in our year-round, on-campus and off-campus recruiting events,” Spivey explains. “We also have developed a comprehensive marketing brochure and sophisticated, individualized marketing materials for 38 separate U.S. cities, along with Europe- and Asia-centric marketing literature.”

Janet Bolin, associate dean of admissions and student services, concurs: “We are letting the world know about our amazingly talented and diverse students. For example, our law school is among the most selective in terms of entering LSAT metrics and has risen the most rapidly of any other top law school. Most important, we have students from all over the nation and world who want to practice in nearly every conceivable practice area and region, and these students have a collective work ethic and loyalty that is second to none.”

At the same time, the law school is cultivating deep relationships with hiring partners throughout the nation. In the first



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(above) Mark F. "Thor" Hearne II, JD '86, right, a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellows and partner at Lathrop & Gage LLP in Kansas City, Missouri, explains the fellowship program's application process to first-year law students Joseph Vardner and Katherine McRobbie.



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(right) Michael Spivey, assistant dean for career services, strategy, and marketing, addresses law students on the school's approach to job placement.

five months alone, either Dean Syverud, Associate Director Kati Scannell, Spivey, or other CSO personnel visited partners at more than 100 major firms in key cities. These include Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Nashville, New York City, San Diego, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C., as well as Charlotte, North Carolina; Jefferson City, Missouri; Kansas City, Kansas; Kansas City, Missouri; and Palo Alto, California. Additionally, they also made personal calls in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai.

The CSO also has been successful in bringing to campus 10 new firms for the Intersession Practice Showcase for first-year students and 14 additional law firms for on-campus student interviews.

Jeffrey Chapman, a partner at Vinson & Elkins LLP in Dallas, says he is impressed by the CSO's new focus. "Employer-matching is a truly great component of the overarching career services program, and Washington University Law is clearly climbing up the ranks—both of which are very relevant to us and to where we decide to interview. We are pleased with the students and career services professionals we have met. We will be back."

The CSO is also developing other innovative ways to reach out to employers. Ron Gorgen, a principal at Edward Jones in St. Louis, says his firm met with law school officials last August to discuss developing a pipeline of candidates for summer

internships, part-time employment, and full-time employment for Edward Jones' Legal and Compliance Division.

"The timing to get this program off the ground couldn't have been better," Gorgen says. "From the start, Mike Spivey and Kati Scannell have been enthusiastic, cooperative, and persistent in making this happen. We are excited to both meet and work with Washington University Law students."

Spivey adds that another important component is the CSO partnering with current law faculty, staff, and alumni to reach out to employers and law school graduates: "The assistance of our deans; alumni and development staff; professors, such as David Becker; and alumni leaders, including Alicia McDonnell, Maury Poscover, and Steven Rappaport, has been invaluable."

Abby Schneider, JD/MBA candidate '10, says the CSO's new approach has made a huge difference in her job search: "In previous years, I would walk into the office with a list of employers I had found online to see whether any of the advisors knew any of them. I then spent my advising meetings polishing up my résumé to cold-send, but rarely heard back from employers."

"Last fall, I had a totally different experience. I spent my time talking with Associate Director Kati Scannell about which companies not only have the job opportunities I was looking for, but also have alumni or other contacts who would be interested in talking with me.

"The outreach that she and the other CSO officers are doing is tremendous," Schnieder continues. "When I called one such firm, they not only were expecting my call, but they knew about Washington University and my academic background. The firm was eager to set up an interview and quick to extend an offer for summer employment. The entire job-search process was much more direct, and I truly felt like the CSO staff were backing me through each step."

The CSO's efforts with employer-matching are paying dividends in a variety of employment opportunities for students ranging from private practice to government agencies to judicial clerkships.

The current ebb of the global economy has not been a discouraging factor, either, Spivey asserts: "If anything, this new strategic emphasis could not have come at a better time—we are pushing forward as many others are pulling back. By adding unique outreach programs, mutually beneficial partnerships, and tangible value to firms, we are in the process of creating a more substantial portfolio to offer employers." ■■■