DEVELOPING LEGAL EXPERIENCE:  
STRATEGIES FOR EVENING STUDENTS

Evening students often face numerous challenges in balancing current employment, law school coursework, and personal responsibilities. Finding the time to gain practical legal experience in addition to all these other demands seems daunting, but gaining such experience is important for your legal job search and building your legal resume.

Below are a number of creative ways evening students can develop practical experience. **No matter what your situation, meet with your Career Advisor to discuss all your options.** The Chicago-Kent Career Services Office has evening hours on Tuesdays, but your assigned advisor will always work with you to find a time to meet that is convenient for your schedule. Phone appointments are also available. We’re here to help!

- **Work with your current employer.** To the extent possible, work with your current employer to gain legal experience. Some things to consider:
  - **Legal Departments:** If your employer has an in house legal team, consider asking for projects from the department, or to be reassigned as a member of that team. If neither option is viable, consider building relationships with department members through informational interviews.
  - **Sabbaticals:** Students have been able to obtain sabbaticals from some employers, whether for a semester or eight week summer session, allowing them to take on outside legal work or participate in clinics.
  - **Flexible Work Schedules:** Rearranging your hours by coming in later, leaving earlier, taking long lunches, etc. can provide additional opportunities. For example, a 4 day work week with longer hours per day allows you to use one free weekday to gain practical experience.
  - **Strengthen your “legal” skill set:** Seek out research, drafting, and analytical project opportunities at your current job, developing strong transferable skills.

- **Volunteer:** Volunteer your time to a public interest group or government agency. You'll develop practical legal skills and relationships with attorneys who will attest to your legal abilities. Contact organizations in which you are interested to learn whether they have evening or weekend hours. Two good places to look for volunteer opportunities are Illinois Pro Bono and Chicago-Kent's Public Interest Resource Center. At Illinois Pro Bono, click on the "Directory" tab to identify legal aid organizations. Click on the organization you are interested in to find out if they take volunteers. Chicago-Kent's Public Interest Resource Center produces a newsletter, "Public Interest Matters", which lists volunteer opportunities.

Examples of opportunities evening students have utilized in the past include:
  - **LiveHelp Operator for Illinois Legal Aid Online** Volunteer from anywhere you are connected to the internet to answer questions via instant message from site users. Minimal time commitment required.
  - **Chicago-Kent CAJT Self Help Web Desk at the Daley Center** Evening students working downtown have volunteered during long lunch breaks, helping pro se litigants identify and complete correct court forms.
  - **New Americans Initiative** (run by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights) Citizenship Application Workshops – held one Saturday per month.
  - **LadderUp** Tax law/tax prep opportunity, clinics nights & weekends, lots of client interaction
Utilize Your Networks: Evening students often have naturally occurring networks, whether through their current employment, a neighborhood or condo association, parent-teacher associations, non-profit involvement, or government board membership. Let your networks know about your transition to a legal career as many opportunities develop through such casual conversations.

Informational Interviews: If your schedule is too packed to allow you to gain any direct legal experience, informational interviewing becomes a crucial tool for gathering information to sound knowledgeable to prospective employers. Learn what issues are central to your practice areas of interest, and what kind of experience employers are seeking so you will know how to counter concerns about any lack of direct experience. Once you are ready to look for a legal job, talking with practitioners, classmates, alums, etc. will make you aware of position openings and meet persons with the ability to assist you in your career goals. Informational interviews can also accommodate your schedule in that you can contact persons by phone or e-mail, and then follow-up with a meeting (perhaps during your lunch hour).

Work for a law firm: Working part-time or on a project basis for a law firm will help you develop the on-the-job skills that are important to success in law practice. Ask attorneys about specific assignment work; you may be able to draft motions, briefs, etc. and work on other matters on your own time, making adjustments for your current work schedule. Some evening students opt to find full-time employment as a law clerk or paralegal for a law firm during their four years in law school. This is an excellent means of acquiring practical legal experience. In some instances, employers have offered attorney positions to their clerks or paralegals, once they have completed law school.

Faculty Research Assistant: Students hired for these positions assist professors with their current research. The assistantship can give you the chance to sharpen your research and writing skills and develop closer contact with a faculty member who is researching one of your areas of interest. And, many professors are willing to accommodate evening students' schedules. During the legal job search, it can be very helpful to have a faculty member who has worked closely with you speak about your analytical and writing ability. Faculty members can be excellent networking contacts as well.

Chicago-Kent's Clinical and Externship Programs: Though clinical and advanced externship programs require a commitment during daytime work hours, some evening students have been able to arrange a clinical schedule around their current employment. The summer term is only eight weeks long, and may work better for your schedule.

- The Law Offices of Chicago-Kent offers in-house work on real cases in a variety of practice areas. All provide an excellent opportunity to develop practical experience and earn credit.
- Judicial Externship Program allows students the unique opportunity of acting as a "junior law clerk" for a judge. The externship provides you with the opportunity to see the judicial system first hand, to better understand judicial process, and to gain hands-on experience drafting opinions and doing research. Although most judges will require that you take time away from your daily responsibilities, some judges and their clerks are flexible in scheduling in-chamber meetings and some of the research and writing can be done at night or on weekends. A summer externship may offer more flexible scheduling.
- Legal Externship Program, another clinical program, gives you the opportunity to work for a law firm, corporate law department, or government agency for the period of one semester. It's a great way to make contacts and learn about one of the legal fields in which you're most interested.
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- **Bar association activities:** Become an active committee member through one of the many available bar associations. As a committee member, you can network and work side-by-side with attorneys who practice in the areas of law in which you are interested. The Chicago Bar Association has committees in over 70 practice groups that meet during the lunch hour at the CBA’s downtown headquarters. Suburban bar associations are great options for students working outside Chicago, and have active and involved members. Visit our website for a listing of bar associations in the Chicago area.

- **Write an article:** Write a law-related article for publication in a legal or non-legal journal. An article is a great way to show a prospective employer that you have a sincere interest in a particular area of law. Legal employers recognize the time and commitment that go into writing a publishable article. Publishing an article can help you transition from your current career to your legal career by demonstrating your high degree of interest in and level of commitment to the legal profession.

- **Attend Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Classes:** CLE courses cover a wide range of practice areas and topics, and can assist you in building knowledge of specific legal areas. In person courses also offer great networking opportunities with attorneys in careers that interest you. Webcast CLEs are convenient for busy schedules, and students can often get discounted rates or attend for free.

- **Making the leap to legal employment:** Whether you maintain your current employment throughout your time at Chicago-Kent, choose to pursue a new position through OCI, Symplicity postings or other contacts, or move to the full time division, you need to make a plan for your transition to legal employment. Meet early and often with your Career Advisor to discuss all your options and develop the career path that is right for you.
UPCOMING FALL 2013 CAREER PROGRAMS

MANDATORY 1L RESUME AND COVER LETTER WORKSHOPS
All 1L Students: Tuesday, September 24 at noon and 5:30pm or Wednesday, September 25 at 3pm

Public Interest Week
For students who may be interested in working for the government or in legal aid positions, come attend several programs regarding public interest careers!

- **Tuesday, October 8 at noon (Room 345):** Preparing your PILI Application (see below)
- **Wednesday, October 9 at 5:30pm (RSVP required, watch for announcement):** Speed-Networking with State and Local Government Attorneys
- **Thursday, October 10, noon-2pm:** Prosecution & Criminal Defense Programs
- **Saturday, October 12 at 8:30am:** Explore the Possibilities: Pro Bono & Public Interest Law Opportunities (see below, students must pre-register for this event)

OCTOBER

- **Exploring Careers in Small or Midsize Law Firms – Wednesday, October 2, 3pm**
- **Preparing your PILI Application – Tuesday, October 8 at noon, Room 345.** The Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) offers $5,000 internships for students who spend their summer at one of their designated Chicago-area legal aid organizations. Learn helpful tips from the Executive Director of PILI, past recipients, and alumni to prepare the best application possible!
- **Explore The Possibilities: Pro Bono & Public Interest Law Opportunities – Saturday, October 12, 8:30am - noon.** This program is for Chicago area law students and recent graduates who are interested in learning more about opportunities as volunteers, interns or fellows at public interest law organizations. Leading attorneys in private, government and public interest law practice will attend. Student must pre-register for this event held annually at Chicago-Kent. Please watch for the registration announcement.
- **Student-to-Student Career Fair – Tuesday, October 22.** Come hear from your fellow students (upperclassmen) about law clerk jobs in a variety of legal practice areas and settings.
- **Meet the Public Service Employers Reception – Tuesday, October 29, 5-7pm at Loyola.** Meet and mingle with representatives from over 50 area public interest and government employers during this evening reception at Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

NOVEMBER

- **Alternative Careers Day – Wednesday, November 6.** This is an entire day of activities geared towards students interested in Alternative Careers. The day concludes with an Alternative Careers Reception so students can network with professionals who use their legal education and experience in alternative careers.
- **ABA Judicial Internship Opportunities Program/Association of Corporate Counsel Minority Diverse Law Student Panel – Tuesday, November 12 at noon.** Chicago-Kent students who have participated in the JIOP judicial externship program and the ACC diversity program discuss their experiences applying, interviewing and working with a judge or corporation over the summer.
- **Practice Tracks – Thursday, November 14, 5-7pm at Chicago Bar Association.** Easy networking with attorneys from several legal practice areas.
The Official Guide to Legal Specialties, Lisa Abrams
Written by Chicago-Kent College of Law’s former Assistant Dean of Career Services, this resource provides a descriptive glimpse into thirty legal practice areas. Not sure what you want to practice? Read this book first so that you get a better idea of your options.

Guerrilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams, Kimm Walton
Easy-to-read, thorough approach to the legal job search. Discusses the entire job search process from personal assessment to resume writing, interviewing and salary negotiation. Also addresses non-traditional jobs for lawyers.

The Happy Lawyer: Making a Good Life in the Law, Nancy Levit
The Happy Lawyer examines the causes of dissatisfaction among lawyers, and then charts possible paths to happier and more fulfilling careers in law. Eschewing a one-size-fits-all approach, it shows how maximizing our chances for achieving happiness depends on understanding our own personality types, values, strengths, and interests.

This is a comprehensive interview guide for lawyers interviewing for any type of a legal job.

How to Work a Room: The Ultimate Guide to Savvy Socializing in Person and Online, Susan RoAne
The “classic” book for the inexperienced as well as the experienced in networking. Identifies numerous strategies to utilize contacts and avoid common mistakes.

It’s Who You Know: Career Strategies for Making Effective Personal Contacts, Cynthia Chin-Lee
Another renowned resource regarding the art of networking. The author presents reasons for networking, ways to establish a network and provides concrete ideas for “making it happen.”

The Curmudgeon’s Guide to Practicing Law, Mark Hermann
This book is described as “offer[ing] practical and honest, if blunt, advice for surviving and thriving in a law firm. He tells you what you need to know about billing, managing your assistant, drafting internal memos, dealing with clients and building your law practice. Find out what drives law partners crazy, what will impress them and what ten mistakes you should avoid.”

What Can You Do With a Law Degree?, Deborah Arron
An in-depth review of the multitude of options for lawyers in non-traditional settings. The author provides practical suggestions for the job search and ways to address objections from non-legal employers.

What Law School Doesn’t Teach You…But You Really Need to Know, Kimm Walton
Reinforces why what you learn outside of the classroom is just as important as your GPA and covers the Do’s and Don’ts of working in a law firm, government agency or non-profit organization.
Your reputation in the legal community begins now as a law student, and you should strive for absolute professionalism in each and every contact you have with professors and attorneys (your future colleagues and supervisors). Be mindful that the legal community is small, even in large metropolitan markets such as Chicago, and news of poor behavior travels quickly among legal professionals. First impressions make a lasting impact, and your reputation for ethical behavior, competence, and professional demeanor precedes you wherever you go. Follow the professionalism tips below to ensure you develop a good reputation from day one.

**E-Mail**
- Summarize your e-mail in a brief, relevant subject line.
- Address the person to whom you are sending a message by name. (“Dear Mr. Smith:”)
- Be clear about why you are writing at the outset, and keep the e-mail brief.
- Error on the side of being formal. Do not get too familiar (do not begin your e-mail with “hey!”) and stay away from colloquial terms.
- Do not use too many exclamation points!!!
- When you are upset, do not press “send.”
- No matter how happy you are, do not use a smiley-face (emoticons are not appropriate).
- Respond to e-mail messages in a timely manner.
- Beware of the “reply-to-all” feature. When in doubt, use the forward function, which forces you to type in the names of your e-mail recipients, instead of reply or reply-to-all.
- Sign your name with a respectful closing, such as “Regards” or Thank you.”
- Remember, e-mails live forever. Do not write anything in an e-mail that you would not want to see printed out in paper form.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread.

**Voicemail and Phone**
- When making phone calls, always identify yourself.
- Ask if the person has time to speak with you.
- The voicemail message on your home and/or cell phone should be professional. Don’t have popular songs play while someone is trying to reach you; use a standard ring tone.
- When leaving a message for others on voicemail, enunciate and speak slowly. Repeat your name and contact information twice.
- A number of attorneys and professionals convert their voicemails into written text messages or documents. If you must leave a long, substantive voicemail, write out your message first and practice it to avoid repeating yourself and saying “um,” “like,” or other conversation fillers.
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Social Media
- Protect your reputation by selecting high privacy settings in your social media accounts to prevent bar examiners and potential employers from viewing inappropriate material.
- Think before you Tweet or post. You must take responsibility for statements or videos you make or post online.
- Do not use LinkedIn the same way you would use Facebook. They are two different platforms, and in general, LinkedIn should be used for professional networking purposes only.
- Never gossip about or comment about a client, judge or supervisor online.

Personal Interactions: In the Workplace and the Classroom
- Be forthright and honest.
- Respect everyone’s authority, knowledge and contributions. This includes support staff.
- Understand that generational differences may exist between you and your supervisors, co-workers, clients and professors. You may need to adjust your communication style to be more effective when communicating with supervisors, clients and professors of a different generation.
- Turn off your smartphone in a meeting or in class. “Secretly” checking your phone during a meeting or event sends the negative message that “This e-mail/Facebook update/incoming text message is more important than you are.”
- Be on time (or early) to meetings and events.
- Be responsive and reliable: return phone calls and e-mails and meet deadlines. If you think you cannot meet a deadline, communicate that to your supervisor immediately and directly.
- Maintain client confidentiality. Be careful about discussing matters or reading confidential materials in public areas, such as elevators, restaurants or trains.
- Always take a pen and legal pad whenever meeting with any supervising attorney or professor, and ask questions to clarify each assignment and the issues to be researched.
- Request feedback from your supervisor, professor or teaching assistant regarding your performance and progress.
- Treat every draft you turn in as a final work product. Even when your attorney supervisor requests a “first draft” memorandum or pleading, proofread your work to ensure that it is free from typos or errors.

Personal Interactions: Social Events
- Do not drink excessive amounts of alcohol at work engagements.
- Do not limit yourself to a certain group of people. Expand your network and introduce yourself to new coworkers or law students.
- Take cues from co-workers regarding appropriate dress at office social events, but in general, professional, conservative dress is appropriate. Strive to be memorable because of your personality and work achievements—not because of your clothing or accessories.
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USING SYMPLICITY:
FOR CHICAGO-KENT COLLEGE OF LAW 1L LAW STUDENTS

“Symplify” – Chicago-Kent’s online career management and job posting system
- Visit this website regularly during your law school career to view and apply for law clerk positions, externship and internship opportunities, and legal volunteer activities
- Use Symplify to schedule a meeting with your career advisor
- View password-protected career resources under the Resources tab (the “Document Library”) in Symplify

How to Login to Symplify:
1) Shortly after orientation, all 1L students will receive an email from kentcso@kentlaw.iit.edu with the heading: “Career Services Office: Symplify Access”
2) Please read this email and follow the directions to log in to Symplify
3) Next, update your personal contact information and career profile

How to make an appointment to meet with your assigned career advisor:
1) 1Ls must make an appointment with their career advisor and upload a resume onto the Symplify job posting system between October 15, 2013 and January 24, 2014
2) On the Symplify homepage, on the right side of the screen under “CAREER TOOLS AND ADVISING,” click on “Request an Appointment.”
3) Select “Counseling: Initial” for your first career counseling appointment. Note: Your assigned career advisor’s name will appear on this page.
4) Next, select timeframes for your initial appointment (days, time), and click “Check Availability.” Choose an available appointment time.
5) Problems? Please contact our office kentcso@kentlaw.iit.edu or at 312-906-5200

![Symplify Appointment Calendar](image-url)
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How to Access Career Resources in Symplicity:
Once you login to Symplicity, please review the helpful career resources located under the red Resources tab (in the “Document Library”) in Symplicity. Some of these resources include:

- Chicago Area Law Firm List (list of every law firm in Chicago with 4 or more attorneys)
- Government Honors and Internship Handbook
- Music Attorney Registry
- Prosecution Handbook
- Public Defender Handbook
- Public Interest Job Search Handbook for 1Ls
- Various handouts related to the job search, including “Researching Legal Employers,” “The Out of State Job Search,” “Salary Negotiations” and “Writing Samples”

To access these resources, click on the red “Resources” tab at the top of your Symplicity screen, and select “Document Library.” (Arrow 1) You may also access the Document Library by clicking on “View Document Library” under “MORE” on the right side of your Symplicity homepage.

Only 20 items will appear when you first arrive at the page; you can change this using the “SHOW” feature (Arrow 2). Because there are so many resources in the Document Library, all items have been assigned “tags” to help you search for and sort resources within the library. To use this feature, hold your cursor over the “Tags” section. (Arrow 3) A drop down menu will appear, and from this you can select the tag that interests you. Some items have multiple tags, and will appear in multiple searches.
How to View Job Postings in Symplicity
To view job postings in Symplicity, click on the red “Jobs” tab at the top of your Symplicity screen, and select “CSO Jobs.” Once there, you may search the posted jobs by Keywords, Practice Areas or Position Type, or you may run an “Advanced Search” for specific jobs. Please contact your career advisor with questions about how to best search through job postings.

How to Run an Advanced Search and Use Search Agents
Use the “Advanced Search” tab while looking at job postings to refine your search of job postings with multiple filters including city, state, country, employer type and industry type.

1) Choose a specific name for your search such as “Indianapolis Jobs” or “Public Defense.”
2) Select the filters you would like to search with (e.g. Employer Type, Position Type, City)
3) Run the search by clicking the “Submit” button.
4) View your list of saved searches by clicking on the Search Agents tab.
5) Review and/or edit a Search Agent by clicking in the Options column.

How to Run Search Agents / Receive Email Notifications
1) To enable a Search Agent, click on the name of the Search Agent (in the Label column) or the Schedule button (in the Options column) and click “Yes” in the Enabled field.
2) Then set a Period and a Multiple (the values entered will be used to determine how frequently your agent is run), and click the “Submit” button.
Symplicity will run enabled Search Agents automatically, and then email the results.