

OFFICE OF CAREER PLANNING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What services does the Office of Career Planning & Professional Development provide?

The Office of Career Planning & Professional Development (CPPD) offers comprehensive career guidance and job search assistance to FAMU Law students and graduates. We provide individual advising and assessment, assistance on resumes, cover letters and mock interviews, offers and salary negotiation. We produce career development programming on a variety of topics. We also conduct outreach to law firms and organizations to provide you with networking, learning, and work opportunities.

CPPD's services are open to current students and FAMU Law graduates no matter the year of graduation. We routinely receive job postings for opportunities requiring bar licensure or additional years of post-grad experience.

During this period of COVID-19, you can still meet with our office remotely over the phone or by Zoom. You can also continue uploading your resume to 12Twenty for review. To schedule an appointment with us, please visit <https://law-famu.12twenty.com/Login> or email our office at cppd.law@famu.edu.

2. What should I do if I do not have a summer internship?

For starters, you should still be looking for an internship. We know of several organizations that are still hosting summer internships, and some who are still looking for candidates. Students can still obtain summer internship opportunities in May and June. Please continue to check the job board in 12Twenty, and continuously check for opportunities in the Government Honors and Internship Handbook. You should also reach out to contacts that you made during the year and follow-up to see if those organizations need any assistance.

Secondly, non-profit organizations like legal aid societies, rely on volunteer assistance during the summer months. To the extent that you are searching for a way to gain experience, please consider contacting a non-profit or a legal aid society. Speak with their volunteer coordinator and ask about ways you can gain experience and hone your research and writing abilities.

Thirdly, consider working with an experienced professional drafting an article for publication in a journal or on an organization's website. Drafting an article and doing the research and analytical work that comes with drafting an article will help you develop your skills.

Invest time this summer researching new laws that are impacting the way our society works, consumers conduct business, and individuals socialize. As these emerging topics become more prevalent, the research and reading you conduct may be valuable to organizations that have not yet had an opportunity to delve into those issues.

You may also wish to check out information on law careers at the National Association for Law Placement's (NALP) website. NALP has research articles and links to great information on Bar Admission Required and JD Advantage careers. www.nalp.org

Pro Tip: One way to learn about new topics and see new concepts in action is to go observe court (once the courts reopen and it is safe to do so).

3. Can you still help me prepare for an interview?

Absolutely! CPPD can meet with students over the phone or by Zoom for a mock interview that closely mimics the actual interview setting. Our office will review student documents including resume, cover letter, writing sample cover sheets, and transcripts to ensure student responses align with the position sought. After the mock interview has been completed, students will receive feedback helpful to their specific professional needs.

We will help you learn the nuances of interviewing by video and give you tips and items to consider when interviewing virtually, such as attire and dealing with technical and environmental issues. We can also help you think of ways to respond to job opportunities when the organization asks you to upload a short video where you answer questions the organization poses to you.

We will also help you prepare for questions employers may have about your demonstrated interest, coursework, and your transcript, including your grades during remote instruction.

Pro Tip: Employers interested in understanding how well you deal with adversity may ask you questions about how you were able to adapt to the pandemic and the changing conditions. Be ready to explain how you adapted and thrived.

4. How can I continue to network if there are no actual networking events?

Currently, businesses and professional organizations are working tirelessly to remain relevant and available for new business and opportunities. To that end, some organizations have moved their events to an online platform to continue networking. Visit their website and email organizations to express an interest in attending. The next step is attending the online event and following up with the presenters via email just as you would following an in-person event. If you were interested in attending an event that was postponed or was cancelled, please consider contacting the event organizer to acquire the material that was to be covered or to ask if they can help you connect to speakers, panelists, vendors, or other participants.

Consider reaching out to individuals in the legal community for informational interviews. Informational interviews are informal conversations with a potential employer, a new contact, or someone from whom you could learn. During these conversations, you can ask a wide variety of questions. Try to learn about the person with whom you are speaking and what they like about their career path. You should also try to learn as much as you can about the organization, industry, and key players. You may wish to ask how to develop your skill set for opportunities in the field and get help with your job search materials.

Pro Tip: Try using social media to grow your network and obtain informational interviews. By using LinkedIn and Twitter, students can connect to professionals in the legal field, while obtaining information on the professional's past work history, interests, and more. Please update your profiles; make sure the profiles do not have any discrepancies with your resume; and ensure you have a professional headshot for your profile picture.

5. I do not know if my bar exam is going to be offered. I do not know when I can take the bar exam. How can I begin my job search if I do not have this information?

Many law firms, governmental agencies, judges, and other employers are aware that this is an issue. Employers are grappling with business needs, changing talent recruitment strategies, and trying to gauge how to interview and onboard new employees in the current market.

Here is the good news: You are not alone. Graduating students all over are grappling with this. States are still working out how their bar exams will be administered and offered. The availability of the Uniform Bar Exam adds an extra layer of complexity to job searching.

Fortunately, the starting point for your job search has not changed. You need a job search plan. You still must conduct a thoughtful analysis on who you are, what your skill set is, and how your talent will add value. You also must consider the environment where you would like to work. Then, you need to come up with a list of target employers. After you analyze your unique value, you will have to figure out how to communicate it to address the target employers' concerns. In other words, you will have to shift your thinking externally.

Is your intended practice area/industry expanding or contracting? What are the new opportunities in your field and where are they? You may wish to shift your initial career focus to an area that is expanding. These opportunities will likely welcome applications and could be more understanding about bar related constraints. If you are considering an industry or practice area that is contracting, you may need to spend more time figuring out how to communicate your value in a way that helps employers cope with contraction. You may also have to compete against displaced, experienced lawyers in that field during the job search process.

Learn as much as you can about how the work environment is changing. For example, if you want to be a litigator, talk to litigators to find out what types of things they are doing now to resolve disputes, meet with clients, and comply with court ordered deadlines. Once you understand the current situation, you can tailor your job search materials and interview strategy to help answer the business' needs.

Please feel free to reach out to us directly if you would like to discuss this issue. You may also wish to contact us if you are interested in JD Advantage jobs that do not require bar passage.

Pro Tip: If you are asked about licensure (during an interview or in the beginning stages of the hiring process) be genuine. In other words, it is okay to tell an employer that you are not sure when you will be able to sit for the examination based upon the bar exam offering schedule. Let the employer know about your plans for preparing for and taking the bar exam. Share with them your readiness to help with issues that do not require your licensure.

6. Since the pandemic was declared, I have not yet heard from the company where I was going to work this summer. What should I do?

Each circumstance, related to each company, and for that matter, each individual internship position varies greatly. We would be happy to speak with you about your individual situation. For example, some people are relocating to a new location for the summer. Relocations require a different type of deliberation than an internship, where you can commute from your Orlando area residence.

In general, if you have not yet heard from the company, we encourage you to reach out to your contact and confirm your start date with the company. You could send an email or reach out by phone, whichever is more comfortable for you. During a phone call, you will have an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and develop a rapport with your contact at the organization. Either way, when you reach out, you should reiterate your excitement about contributing to the organization. You may also wish to ask if the company is making provisions for its employees to work remotely or otherwise be safe.

You may have already sent an email or called expressing your desire to hear from the company about this summer, and your contact has not returned your call or email. We encourage you to follow-up at regular intervals, perhaps weekly on Mondays (or whatever day you choose). Each time you reach out, make sure to be respectful to your contact, and to thank them for their time and the opportunity.

The company could have already let you know that you will hear more about the summer opportunity after the company has had some time to make some internal decisions. We suggest speaking with your contact to find out a timetable for when the company expects to have a decision. After you know this information, you should follow-up after the appointed time has passed.

We know that these times are difficult and that you may be experiencing a great deal of nervousness related to your summer employment. Employers are likely feeling similarly. We are more than willing to speak with you about your evolving summer plans.