

2L Student Handbook



<p>Alisa N. Benedict O'Brien, Esq. The University of Akron C. Blake McDowell School of Law Assistant Dean Career Services Akron, Ohio 44325-2901 Telephone: 330-972-8540 Email: ab139@uakron.edu</p>	<p>Alecia Bencze, Esq. The University of Akron C. Blake McDowell School of Law Director Career Services Akron, Ohio 44325-2901 Telephone: 330-972-7876 Email: anb77@uakron.edu</p>
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The University of Akron School of Law

Career Services Offices

C. Blake McDowell Law Center

150 University Avenue, Suite 245

Akron, Ohio 44325-2901

330-972-8540

<https://www.uakron.edu/law/career-services/>

Akron Law Jobs @ <https://law-akron-csm.symplicity.com/students>

(Symplicity Website)

lawcareerplanning@uakron.edu

If it's all you read, read these four things.

This handbook is about you and your needs. We have tried to break it out into sections/topics that are easy to access and that make sense based on our experience, surveys, and what has helped students at other schools. The idea is to give you tools and examples that let you actually do the things we are suggesting, not just read about them.

We care about your grades, but we do not care about your grades. It is true that grades matter, that most employers pay attention to them, and that they can impact the opportunities you have available now and at graduation. All that said, we DO NOT CARE what your grades are. What we care about is you and your individual success. While you may hear a lot about OCIs and judicial clerkships, the truth is these programs largely run themselves and get very little attention from us. Our focus is actually on the middle and bottom third of the class, working with them individually and through other programs to help them achieve their ambitions.

We are here to help you personally in whatever way works best for you. If the ideas or tools in this handbook don't make sense to you or this is not the way you prefer to get information, then we are personally asking you to come into the CSO and let us help you directly. Even if you think this is a great tool for you, we want you to come in and see us in person. We love what we do, and helping you is the best part.

The Buck Stops Here. If this handbook is confusing or missing something you wish it had, if you feel we are helping others find their path, but not helping you, if you see a gap in the programming we put together (like the kinds of legal and nontraditional career areas you want exposure to), please come in and meet with us. We want to know, it will not offend us, and it matters. Like we said, we love what we do, and we want to do it better.

2L Handbook

Welcome to your 2L year! When we surveyed the recent graduating class about how the CSO could have better served them, we discovered that many felt they fell in a gap during their 2L year. They were caught between all the attention focused on 1Ls, getting them up and running in a new and challenging experience, and the time spent attending to 3Ls, preparing them to graduate, sit for the bar, and launch their careers. This supplement, along with some programs we have planned for the fall, are just part of filling that gap and our commitment to your success.

1L Summer is OVER! What Now?

Consider the following statements –

1. 1L OCIs were a disaster, the summer did not go according to plan, and if anyone says the word “network” my head will explode... but I really do want a summer job after my 2L year.
2. The folks at my summer job were nice, but I would rather spend the summer working in the Upside Down from “Stranger Things” than spend my life in that practice area.
3. I loved the practice area of my summer gig, and I can’t imagine finding a job anywhere else!
4. Nice people and a cool practice, but my spouse just landed a med school residency in Houston, where I don’t know anyone and am just too tired to think about starting my search all over again.
5. So THAT is what practicing law means, huh...I know I saw an ABA article on alternative careers for law school grads somewhere....

We are here as your counsel, we are committed to you and your success, and we missed you over the summer, so come and see us!

Alisa Benedict O’Brien
Assistant Dean of Career Services
and Strategic Initiatives
(2L & 3L Counselor)

Alecia Bencze
Director of Career Services
and Strategic Initiatives
(1L & 2Y JD Counselor)

Updating Your Resume, Elevator Pitch, and Cover Letter

How to describe what you did this summer.

It is likely you just gained your first legal experience. It might even be the first professional experience you have under your belt. It is important to take full advantage of all you did this summer by incorporating it into your resume, your elevator pitch, and your cover letter.

Below you will find some examples to help you. Here is how this works:

- The statement inside the quote marks is what you might tell us or a local attorney if we asked you about your summer job.
- Next is the elevator pitch. It assumes you have already looked an attorney in the eye, given them a solid handshake (or virtual greeting), introduced yourself, and asked their name if you don't know it. Keep in mind that your goal is to make a good first impression, find common ground and then make the ask (i.e., learning about them and what they do, asking for their advice, or even setting up a meeting over coffee sometime down the road.)
- Finally, we show you how you might add your experience to your resume.

Give it a try on your own, and then come in and see us and we can help you refine these skills.

Example 1 – Summer clerk at a private law firm

“This summer I did a lot of research for the attorneys in the firm looking at estate taxes, election funding disclosures and a bunch of issues in a big bankruptcy. Most of the time I would prepare a memo for them, but sometimes they would just want me to tell them what I found or highlight cases. I also prepared an answer to a complaint, drafted part of motion for reconsideration, and I prepared notebooks and attended a couple of depositions.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“I'd love to know about your litigation practice. I had a great summer with a firm working mostly on commercial litigation and bankruptcy in Canton, and it confirmed that it is what I want to do, so any insights would be a huge help.”

XY & Z, L.L.P., Canton, OH

Summer 2024

- Responsible for research and drafting of memoranda on various topics, including numerous commercial bankruptcy issues, estate tax issues and disclosure requirements for campaign and advertising.
- Drafted answer and portions of motion for reconsideration.
- Responsible for preparation of materials for depositions and attended same.

Example 2 – Summer clerk at a private law firm

“My firm was pure family law. I helped draft a couple of settlement orders, and that was kind of intense because we kept getting changes from the other side up until we filed it. I also sat in on most of the client meetings, taking notes and listening. After the client meetings the attorney and I would chat for a few moments about the case. By the end of the summer, I was able to start contributing to these chats. I also got to go to court a few times and helped prepare the attorney notebooks for some of those hearings.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“It’s great to meet you. I got to work at DRLaw this summer, working on family law cases, and I really liked it and am planning to take Professor Thomas’ family law class in the fall. Alisa in career services told me you started your own family law firm, and I was wondering if I could reach out and set up a time to get your advice.”

DRLAW, P.C., Cuyahoga Falls, OH

Summer 2024

Law Clerk

- Responsible for assisting in negotiating and drafting proposed settlement orders in domestic relations matters, including incorporating and tracking changes to key terms.
- Participated in client meetings, gathering information, and then conferring with the attorney on strategy and next steps.
- Prepared attorney notebooks and related materials for various hearings.
- Attended hearings with attorney, assisting with materials and observing procedures.

Example 3 – Summer clerk with county prosecutor

“They had me help on a couple of DUI cases the first week, which was fun because we were in court three times and I got to meet a couple of judges, but mostly it was negotiating the sentence with the other side. The next week they gave me a research project trying to figure out if the Miranda warning a guy got in one county when they picked him up for felony speeding was effective for the county I was in because we had a warrant out for his arrest for failing to show up for a reckless driving court date. Our sheriff went to bring him from their jail to ours but didn’t give him the warning again. The defense had moved to suppress his confession. I also worked on a couple of juvenile cases involving MIPs, mostly looking at the charges, discussing them with my supervisor, and then shadowing her and seeing how she resolved them.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“I would love to get to join the U.S. Attorney’s Office someday. I had a great summer at the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office and hope to get an offer there, or from another prosecutor in the area after graduation. How did you make the move to the U.S. Attorney’s Office from where you started out after graduation?”

Summit County Prosecutor’s Office, Akron, OH

Summer 2024

Summer Intern

- Researched and drafted extensive memoranda regarding defense motion to suppress based on failure to give second Miranda warning to defendant who was in custody and had been Mirandized in another jurisdiction.
- Assisted attorney with DUI hearings and settlements.
- Assisted attorney in juvenile court, primarily with the terms of diversion involving minor in possession charges.

Example 4 – Summer clerk for judge

“I mostly worked with the full-time clerks, but some with the judge too. I did a lot of research into things like did the court have jurisdiction, a motion to unseal some records and that kind of thing. I also spent a lot of time looking up cases cited in motions where the parties were arguing over what it said. For those I would usually find the case, look it over, talk to one of the clerks about what I thought was going on and then they would either take it and incorporate it into their memo themselves or ask me to draft a memo for the judge. I also drafted most of a bench memo on a fight between two brothers of the sale of the family company. I got to sit in on a bunch of cases, like arraignments and bond revocations, and to watch some direct and cross.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“I applied to your firm for an OCI this fall and am hopeful I get picked. I really liked my summer with Judge Adams; he was brilliant, and his clerks were great. Ultimately, I think I am leaning toward more of a transactional practice. Did you always know you wanted to do real estate?”

Chambers of Hon. John Adams, Akron, OH

Summer 2024

Summer Law Clerk

- Responsible for researching, drafting findings on various issues, including jurisdiction and efforts to unseal documents under a protective order.
- Researched and drafted substantial portions of bench memorandum regarding commercial dispute involving sale of closely held corporation.

- Attended hearings on numerous matters, including criminal arraignments, evidentiary hearings and bond revocations.

Example 5 – Work in-house with corporate law department

“I was with Diebold in Canton, Ohio, in house. My first project was helping review a lease on a new warehouse space in Ohio, and then I worked on some licensing agreements. I spent a big part of the summer helping to review the employee manual and update it. That project had a lot of research on changes to labor laws, drafting memos for the lawyers and then helping edit the manual. I think I might want to do labor and employment, so that was cool. Then a lot of what I did was sit in on meetings with outside counsel, who do their litigation, keeping track of where we were on cases and writing updates for the chief counsel to update the COO and CEO.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“I know your firm is labor law-focused. I got the chance to work at Diebold this summer, helping research and update their employee manual because of some changes in the regulations. I thought it was really interesting, and so I changed my spring schedule to take Professor Adinolfi’s employment law class. How did you decide to practice labor law?”

Diebold, Canton, OH

Summer 2024

In House Extern

- Researched and drafted extensive memoranda as part of review and revision of employee manual, ensuring compliance with applicable federal labor law.
- Researched and drafted memoranda for chief counsel and executive leadership on status of litigation by outside counsel.
- Reviewed various contracts and researched issues related to commercial leases and licensing agreements.

Example 6 – Work with public interest organization

“At KidsVoice we focused on challenging how kids in grade and high school can be restrained. So, for now you can lock a kid in a closet or tape them to a chair, and it is up to the teacher to choose how to restrain a student. So, I and another summer clerk worked on a survey of laws in the U.S. for four weeks. We did a memo for that with a compendium of laws, regulation on seminal cases. The lawyer in charge of that and the executive director thought we did a great job, and then we helped draft some proposed legislation with one of the state senator’s offices that they said they are introducing in the fall. I also researched some

disability cases involving students and what the school is required to do for them and helped write an article that they want to publish in the ABA Journal.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“I had the opportunity to help draft some legislation dealing with how schools can restrain students. I really liked working with the legislative staff and am hoping to find an opening either with the legislature or with a non-profit doing policy work. When you graduated, did you know you wanted to do policy work and how did you get on the senator’s staff?”

KidsVoice, Pittsburgh, PA

Summer 2024

Summer Intern

- Researched and drafted 50-state survey regarding restraint of primary and secondary school students, including key statutes, regulations and cases.
- Assisted in drafting proposed legislation for change to Pennsylvania laws regarding restraint of primary and secondary school students, all in conjunction with senator’s staff.
- Researched and assisted in drafting articles regarding schools and scope of services and assistance they are required to give students under federal Pennsylvania law, to be published in the *ABA Journal*.

Example 7 – Work in banking trust department

“I was at ABC Bank in Cleveland. They have a big trust department, so almost everything I did was with them. Part of it was legal research, looking at some tax law changes. Part of it was helping update how they report customers, making sure they meet regulations and best practices, but also to make it easier to use because the old format was kind of ugly and hard to understand. I also helped work on some trusts, but I don’t have Estates and Trusts until the spring, so at first it was just a lot of learning about revocable, and irrevocable, and spendthrift and other trusts. My accounting degree helped, though, and they were really nice and took the time to explain stuff to me so that by the end I think I was contributing in this stuff.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“I decided to spend last summer in the trust department at ABC Bank. I did my undergrad in accounting and know I want to do tax or estate planning work, and I am also thinking I might do an LLM in tax. Could I email you next week and set up a time to talk? It would be great to learn how you succeeded in your practice.”

ABC BANK, Trust Department, Cleveland, OH

Summer 2024

Summer Clerk

- Researched and drafted memoranda on implication of 2010 federal tax law changes on trust distributions.
- Assisted in creation of revised quarterly reports for clients, ensuring compliance with updated federal and state laws and regulations, and making the information easier to consume.
- Assisted in drafting and revising trust instruments for clients, including revocable and spendthrift trusts.

Example 8 – Work as extern with legislative research department

“I was at the Ohio Legislative Services Commission. So, some of what they had me do was research issues raised by legislators because they don’t have staff that can help them. It was kind of all over the place. I did agriculture subsidies, local sales taxes, cigarette and liquor store zoning, and some other stuff. We also took proposed legislation and worked on reconciling it with existing laws so that they didn’t conflict.”

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

“I am really interested in policy work, especially from the lobbying side. I know you do a lot in Columbus representing companies at the legislature, and would love any advice, and learning how you broke in. My summer at the Ohio Legislative Services Commission was great, and I learned a lot about the process of legislation, but I know that is not all the same as what you do.”

Ohio Legislative Services Commission, Columbus, OH Summer 2024

Law Clerk

- Researched and drafted extensive memoranda as part of review and revision of employee manual, ensuring compliance with applicable federal labor law.
- Researched and drafted memoranda for chief counsel and executive leadership on status of litigation by outside counsel.
- Reviewed various contracts.

Example 9 – Work as extern with federal agency

“I externed for credit with the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Akron. I worked on a few projects. The one that was the biggest was helping on a Medicaid fraud case. The doctor had billed like \$6 million in bogus claims over five years. For that one I helped prepare the trial notebooks for the AUSA handing the trial. I also did some research on motions filed by the defense, and I got to go to the trial and sit at the

table. I wrote a memo on the Supreme Court ruling last year on suppression of evidence, seeing how courts were applying the law. I also helped the civil side in a case where a property owner was suing because a contractor on a federal building drove their crane across the landscaping in front of their building, so I got to help with a deposition."

New Elevator Pitch and Resume Section:

"After my summer with the U.S. Attorney, I know I really want to be a prosecutor. I know you joined the Summit County Prosecutor's Office when you graduated two years ago. Would you have time to speak this week or next? Any advice on interviewing for next summer and what it is like working there now would be a huge help."

United States Attorney's Office – Akron, OH

Summer 2024

Summer Extern

- Assisted in researching issues and preparing materials for Medicaid fraud trial, including preparation of trial notebooks, researching issues raised in defense motions and attending trial.
- Researched and drafted memorandum on suppression cases nationally following U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Smith v. State of New Jersey*, 591 U.S. 134, 2015.
- Assisted in civil matters involving trespass and destruction of property claims against government, including helping prepare for and attending depositions.

What if I only took classes this summer?

Classes are, for many students, the best course of action. Maybe you are trying to get out early. Maybe you wanted to raise your GPA and focus on being a student, or perhaps your internship plans fell through because of budget cuts, and all future employers will completely understand. Your resume will not change much, as there is not much more to add. However, you do want to make sure your cover letter is in great shape. You want to make the case for why they ought to hire you, which means demonstrating passion and skill.

While you probably will not speak to taking summer classes directly on your resume (although in some cases you might), you will definitely need to be ready to address it in the interview. You want to be ready to tell them why you decided to focus on academics and how that is part of a plan for your success (and ultimately will benefit future employers). The point is to make taking classes a win in their minds, not something they think you did because you were apathetic about your job search or because there is some other issue with you as a potential employee. Because there are so many variations on how to speak to this issue depending on your individual situation, you should come in and see us in the CSO. As an example, you might say:

“Instead of taking a job, I decided to focus on academics this summer. Law school was a big transition from working for the past several years, and I thought it made sense to get a jump on classes and lift my grades. However, I will be enrolled in the SEED Clinic this fall and am on the list to take the Corporate Legal Skills course with Professor Krull over winter break. I am really excited about both, especially the exposure they will give me to real-world situations in corporate law.”

We can talk through all of this and help you develop talking points that will strengthen you and your choices.

How can I leverage the experience I got to do something totally different next year/semester?

In most cases, this is far less of an issue than you imagine. Employers know that most law students do not know what they want to do when they start school, or that they are going to change their mind at some point. The resume format we use is so focused on functional and transferrable skills that it normally works well in all but the most unusual of circumstances. If, for example, you were in a litigation position doing medical malpractice but now want to do commercial litigation, the “litigation” skills you developed are entirely transferable between the two. If you want to move from litigation to a transactional practice, that is less related, but even in that instance, the resume is unlikely to change much if at all. Where you might make some edits is emphasizing a project that had a more “business” bent versus, say, a torts focus. If you think a more specialized resume may benefit you, go for it, but be careful to make sure that it is formatted perfectly and that you always select the right resume when applying.

Your cover letter, however, may change a great deal, because that's where you tell the story of your "why." Why the change, why this new area, why the experience you had applies, why you are the perfect candidate...and so on. Try drafting a new cover letter, remembering to:

1. Keep it to one page.
2. Tell a story, be specific, and don't list facts (the resume tells the "what"; the cover tells the "why.")
3. Avoid saying things like "I am a hard worker" or "I am a good team player" without backing those statements up with very specific examples.
4. Be authentic.

We suggest you take a couple hours, no more, and get the draft of your new cover letter onto a page, not worrying about how long it is or what it says: just write it. Put the letter in a desk and then pull it out the next day and spend one hour editing. After that, STOP and come in to see us and we will help you get to a final draft quickly.

If you are worried about what to say about your 1L summer in the letter, you might not say anything, focusing instead on your passion for this new area of law you want to pursue. If you do find it makes sense to mention it, then maybe it is in passing, saying something like:

"I have always known I wanted a practice focused on commercial law. In my time at U-Haul, I dealt with a wide array of commercial real estate and equipment leases, purchases and financing issues. I found the work to be compelling, especially working with counsel to finalize agreements worth millions. This past summer I had the opportunity to look at commercial law from the perspective of a litigator with Wilson and Zippy in Akron. While I learned a great deal about how to assist a client when a deal falls apart, the experience confirmed that my passion on the transactional side, negotiating and structuring deals like I did at U-Haul, and helping clients prosper in business."

I had a lousy 1L summer, how do I sell it as a win?

After all the time and effort of landing a summer gig, it can be incredibly frustrating to have it turn out to be a bad experience. There are still ways to sell that to a potential employer as a win, by focusing on what you learned, not what happened. Before we get there, however, you should take a moment to assess the experience, decide if any action is needed as a result of the experience, and then develop your strategy to make a bad experience an asset.

The first thing is to take a moment to think about what happened and see what lessons you can take away. Maybe it is knowing the kind of firm you never want to join, or the kind of person you want to work for. Maybe it is a better way to manage assignments so that your expectations and those of a partner are better aligned. Whatever the case, taking a few moments to think about what you can take away is time well spent.

Next, if you think something you experienced was genuinely inappropriate, you should also consider telling us in the CSO. We can help you assess the next steps and maybe protect future classes from a similar experience. Likewise, if you made a mistake or had a bad relationship with someone, and just could not seem to turn the corner, this is another place we can offer guidance and support. We have faced an array of complex and delicate issues and had great success in helping students navigate a path that was as beneficial to them as possible.

The Resume, Cover Letter and Interviews After a Hard Summer

How do you sell a bad summer experience as a win in your resume? In the resume you focus on the transferable and functional skills you used or developed, just like we did in the examples earlier in this document. Even if there were issues at your employer, it should not undo those skills you developed and demonstrated over the summer.

In the cover letter, focus on the things you want to do, not on the experience you had over the summer. For many folks the letter will not change because the motivation for what you want to do has not changed. If it has changed, because of the summer experience or for other reasons, then you focus on what you aspire toward. The great thing about the cover letter is that you control the content and the message it conveys.

In terms of answering questions about your summer, like “how it went” or “why aren’t you returning there for your second semester,” the answers can be as varied as the situations. The key is to use positive language, being neutral in your descriptions of the experience while also demonstrating your success and ability to overcome a challenge. Below are a couple of examples but because this can be such a delicate line to walk, please make a point of coming to see us so we can help you develop and hone your specific approach.

Example Situation:

“The firm I was with was great during the interview but once there it was not what I expected. Two partners had just left with a big book, so work was slow. The person I interviewed was totally distracted and so no one really managed me or the other summer clerk. I got work, but no real feedback until one partner called me in over a memo. She was really frustrated because it was off topic, and while I can see how she was right, if there had been some guidance, then the whole issue could have been avoided and I would have given her what she wanted, not what I mistakenly thought she was asking for.”

The question from a new firm:

“How was your summer at your 1L firm?”

Response:

“I got to work on a wide array of projects, drafting some parts of larger motions, a couple of discovery requests and also researched some memos. I learned a huge amount, not just about law, but about practice and how to meet different partners’ needs. This was my first exposure to the inner workings at a law firm, and I learned a lot.”

The question from a new firm:

“Why aren’t you returning there next summer?”

Response Option 1:

“I really liked the work, but I think I want a firm that has a broader set of practices.”

Response Option 2:

“I really like the practice areas and the work, but I also know I want an environment where I have a chance to interact with clients and get into court without waiting seven years.”

Response Option 3:

“I really like the litigation aspect, but I found I was not interested in medical malpractice, and really want to focus more on commercial litigation.”

Do I need a specialized resume for each kind of employer?

Likely not, but in some cases...

While you may be tempted to tweak your resume into specialized versions, it also increases the likelihood of a typo or of sending an old version. Your typical law school resume ought to work for 95% of law openings. Potential exceptions are highly specialized practices, like intellectual property, where you need to spend more time on your technical background. Also, by your 3L year, when you are applying for post-grad positions, a specialized resume may be the right approach.

One case where you definitely want to create a specialized resume is if you are applying for a federal job. If it is just a summer gig, like externing with the U.S. Attorney or EPA, this is not you. But if you are actually applying for a post-graduate job, like being an ERISA investigator with the Department of Labor or FOIA Reviewer with the Department of Immigration and Naturalization, you need a long form resume. A long form resume covers your entire work history, in much more detail, and is tailored to the position you are applying for. The reason you do this for federal jobs is that your pay grade is based on the sum total of all your experience. Leaving stuff out now may start you at a lower rank, either now or when you graduate and join full-time, and once you are hired it is very hard to leapfrog levels. Also, because there are so many applicants for federal

jobs, the first pass at culling through applications is often done by a computer that scores your application based on how closely it matches the terms and requirements of the job posting. Come see us and we can help you look at the job posting you are applying for and see how you might set up your resume. It is also good to remember that these federal job postings are often up for just three or four days, so you need to look often and apply quickly!

What can I do to bolster my resume?

If you think your resume is lacking, there are tons of ways to add some real weight to it. Consider the following short list of options:

Research Assistant Jobs— Faculty hire research assistants all the time, and they are not just looking for the top 25%. If you see a posting from a professor you know, and whose area of research is of interest, apply. If you do not see a posting, you still might go ask the professor, because maybe they have the funds to hire someone and just haven't posted yet, and now they will have you in mind. The great thing is not just being able to put this on the resume, but if you do a good job, you will probably be able to have that faculty member be a recommender. We cannot tell you the number of students who have landed jobs because a professor got to know them, and even if the student's grades were not at the top of the class, they could speak to their character and quality of their work.

Publish for a Bar Organization – Bar organizations, like the Ohio Bar Association, Federal Bar Association, American Bar Association, and others, are always looking for articles. Maybe it is profiling a judge, maybe it's about the change to a rule, or maybe it is about your experience in law school. In any case, it gets you exposure to the bar organization, a great line for the resume and your name out in front of all the members. You can even look at co-authoring with a fellow student or faculty member. If you want to give this a shot, look in the bar magazines and see who the contact is, and just give them a call. You should also check the Career Connection, as we will post calls for submission.

Volunteer Opportunities – Your membership in bar organizations is normally free or heavily discounted. In either case, the point of being a member is not so much about putting that on your resume but leveraging that membership into networking and exposure. Make a point of volunteering to help on projects even when they don't ask. Checking in attendees at a bar gala, setting up for CLEs, and licking envelopes for a mail campaign are the kinds of volunteer involvement that get you noticed.

Leadership Opportunities – You should also look for leadership opportunities. Both student orgs on campus and bar orgs off-campus look for members to take on leadership roles. Maybe its treasurer of LAW (Law Association for Women) here at Akron Law, or a committee with the Young Lawyers section of the local bar. In all cases, you will get experience, exposure, and expand your network.

What experiences do I drop or streamline so I can stay on one page?

Congrats on having real and relevant experience to add to the resume! Now the question is what to do about the stuff that leaked over to a second page. For starters, a one-page resume is not an arbitrary choice. Most attorneys we know who make hiring decisions think that longer resumes are red flags, indicating the inability to be brief but clear. You also have to assume that they might never realize there is a second page or that it gets lost. If that happens, then have they missed something important? There are exceptions to this rule when applying for positions like federal jobs or some judicial clerkships, or for work in IP, and if that is you, come see us.

Below are 5 “Dos” and “Don’ts” to get you started, but if you bring in a copy of the resume, we can help you look at a multitude of other ways to keep the resume at one page (and make it look great)!

Dos . . .

1. Get rid of old and irrelevant jobs. This is a job that you had on your 1L resume that has only limited relevance to a law firm. For example, you might drop that job bagging groceries or hosting at a restaurant in high school.
2. Get rid of blank lines. If you are hitting the return key twice as a way to put space between sections and subsections, there is a better way. First, get rid of the extra spaces. Next, go into the paragraph settings in Word and add in smaller spaces by putting in a 0.6 space using the “Space Before” and “Space After” commands. This gets most people four or five lines back.
3. Be concise. Like everything else you write, go back and make sure your bullets are clear, crisp, and efficient. This is especially true for those bullets where just one or two words push into a second line.
4. Consolidate jobs where it makes sense. Maybe you worked as a waiter at three restaurants in undergrad. That is a great experience and shows you at least paid part of your way through school. But instead of listing each one separately, you might combine all three into one heading. Maybe the heading is now Various Restaurants, the position is Assistant Manager/Waiter, and then the first bullet says, “Responsible for overseeing front-of-house staff as manager at Applebee’s,” and then lower bullet might say “Wait-staff at Olive Garden and Rockne’s restaurants, working multiple shifts and training new hires.”

5. Consolidate experiences where it makes sense. Instead of using a separate bullet for every memo, pleading and motion you worked on, cluster them. Try saying “Researched and drafted memoranda on various topics, including adverse possession, changes to retainer rules and zoning for group homes” or “Drafted answer portion of motion for summary judgment, motion to dismiss and request for admission.” If you did a bunch of motions, for example, but there was one really big one you want to emphasize, then you can still give that its own bullet, for example, “Major project involved multimillion-dollar products liability case, drafting key legal and fact sections of motion for summary judgment of same, as well as performing attendant research.”

Don'ts . . .

1. Never get below an 11-point font. Hiring lawyers tend to be older and their eyes are probably nowhere near as good as yours. So, depending on the font you are using, keep it at a readable 11- or 12-point size.
2. Don't get rid of the personal interests/community involvement section. You would be amazed how these sections can make all the difference. They can take an interview that was going to be the longest 20 minutes of your life and make it into the best interview ever. In fact, we think the best interviews are often the ones where you never even got to a discussion about classes, grades or what you worked on last summer, and instead talked about spending holidays building homes for the poor, training for a half marathon during an Ohio summer, or how you were the state grocery-bagging champion in 2017.
3. Avoid more when less will do. Sometimes you will have four bullet points, and the last one is something like “Observed hearing and trials” whereas the other three are more substantive. If that's the case, you can drop this last bullet point. It is likely the least impressive bullet point, and many interviewers will assume that if you did a bunch of motions and similar work, your summer employer took you to watch them in court.
4. Don't lose the white space. Hold your resume (or cover letter, even) out at arm's length. Does it look like a document that someone can scan quickly or like a page out of an experimental stream-of-consciousness novel? White space is critical for readability, and readability matters to lawyers, so make sure your margins are at least .7 inches on all sides.

5. Don't forget to double-check everything. Make sure the resume is perfect. Check to make sure the font is the same, the point size is the same, the bullets are all the same, the margins all line up, each section is formatted the same as every other section, the bullets either all have a period at the end or do not have a period at the end, the names are all spelled correctly and you didn't type a word like "form" when you meant to type "from." The CSO is happy to review your drafts.

NETWORKING

How to Network

Stop thinking about networking as "selling yourself" and start thinking about it as "making friends in the professional world." Lawyers lead full lives outside of their practice areas, and usually, they are social, community-minded folks involved in plenty of activities in which you can also be involved. You might bond over a common interest in cooking, scuba diving, travel, needlepoint, sports (does anyone out there like basketball?) or a myriad of other activities and interests. Think of it this way: when you are networking at an event, you will probably spend about 10% of your time talking about the practice of law and 90% talking about the outside interests and experiences (both theirs and yours). Don't be intimidated, you are a natural at being you!

10 Ice Breakers When You Meet Someone

1. I don't believe we've met, but I wanted to introduce myself...
2. What do you enjoy most about what you do?
3. I'd love to hear about the coolest project/case you have worked on this year.
4. Is this what you thought you'd be doing when you first decided to go to law school?
5. What is the most challenging part of your job?
6. How did you choose this area of law?
7. What do you like to do outside of work in your free time?
8. Are you from this area originally or did you move here for law school/when you joined the firm?
9. Did you start out in this area of practice?
10. Why did you decide to go to law school? Any tips on classes to take/organizations to join?

Networking Opportunities

Every time you are out, you are networking, but there are also lots of dedicated opportunities each semester. Here are just five examples to take advantage of:

1. Offer to help set up at a CLE or Akron Law Alumni event and you will be coming into contact with the expert presenters and the attending practitioners.
2. Attend CLEs, which you can sometimes do for free or very little just by asking for a student rate, at the Akron Bar Association.
3. Attend bar events, which often offer free or discounted admissions, especially if you volunteer to work the door or spearhead promotion to students. Consider attending a “sidebar” at the Akron Bar. Check the Career Connection for upcoming events.
4. Firm holiday parties (often announced in the Career Connection) are ideal ways to meet firm leaders.
5. Create your own event by tapping into resources like the CSO’s Alumni Network, where you pick the practice or industry and we find the attorney and help you set up the meeting at their offices, or maybe over lunch.

The Kevin Bacon List

Our friends at Kansas Law came up with the “Kevin Bacon” list. This is a riff on the old “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” game, where any actor in any film, ever, can be linked to Kevin Bacon in six steps or less and we thought it was a fun and productive exercise to share! The point is that the world is a whole lot smaller and more connected than we think. Putting together a Kevin Bacon List is really powerful, even though it can seem so simple, but to get the benefit you have to actually fill it in because it is way too much info to take in, much less keep track of, in your head. Here is the process and an example in Excel.



Who I Know	What They Do	Who I Want To Know	What They Do	Notes
Saturnina Milbrandt	Lawyer Firm 1	Norah Stormont	County Prosecutor	Speaking on 31st at Akron Bar Meeting
Chris Armentrout	Lawyer Firm 2	Elmer Godin	Associate Firm 1	Akron Law Alum, Speaking on 20th at Akron Law
Roxanne Dezzutti	Delivery Driver FedEX	Otelia Detwiler	Federal Judge	Need name and contact info
Scarlett Junge	Pilot SWA	Alphoso Shemwell	Associate Firm 2	Akron Law Alum, Class of 82
Neomi Whitham	Starbucks Barista	Fletcher Colligan	Partner Firm 2	Akron Law 2015, Labor Law
Birdie Ralls	Engineer Goodyear	Sheridan Hinerman	Partner Firm 4	Penn State Law 2015, Labor Law
Von Fancher	Assistant Prosecutor	Marcellus Eck	Ethics Expert	Akron Law 87, Uncle of Pok Ovitt, Labor Law
Antoine Huntsberry	Graphic Designer	Scindy Shedd	Justice Ohio Supreme	Akron Law 93, Commercial Lit
Pok Ovitt	Grad Student UA	Joye Finchum	Partner Firm 1	Akron Law 80, Adjunct Akron Law
Kai Charity	Grade School Teacher			Akron Law 83, Sam Kerrit is her clerk
Celia Willoughby	Business Owner			
Nita Polston	Amy			
Richie Carron	Navy			
Randi Mcelveen	Lawyer Firm 3			
Hal Schoenrock	Professor KSU			
Cynthia Goris	Travel Writer			
Willia Devin	Dentist			
Betsy Saunder	Accountant			
Oliver Eyre	Technical Writer			
Kathline Trexler	Chef			

1. Make a list with five columns, labeled “Who I Know,” “What They Do and Where,” “Who I Want to Know,” “What They Do,” and “Notes.” You can use

whatever program you like, but we prefer Excel because you can sort it out or add other columns later.

2. In the first column, “Who I Know,” list out everyone you know. This means that person from fifth grade who you friended on Facebook, even if you maybe send them one message a year.
3. In the second column, list out their job title and location. Shorthand is fine here, like Lawyer/Kansas or Teacher/NYC.
4. In the third column, make a list of who you aspire to know. An actual person, like the head of a practice group at a firm, is best, but even a title is fine if you don’t know a person’s name.
5. In the fourth column, list out what the folks who you want to know do.
6. The fifth column is just for you to keep notes as you find info or learn something about people you want to know.

Now the trick is to think about the people in column one, which will grow as you meet more people, and the people in column three, and think about how they might be connected. Look for patterns, shared interests and so on. In the example we shared, the student knows someone at a firm where there are both a partner and an associate the student wants to know. The student also knows a grad student at Akron whose uncle is a partner at a firm that she wants to know.

Even if you don’t see the connections now, getting it down on paper will put you in a position to recognize connections as they emerge. When a friend mentions a name or firm or event, you will have a context for it and how it ties to others. Eventually you will start to find ways to connect with the folks in column three and move them into column one.

We can help you take the “People I Want to Know” in your Keven Bacon list and move them into the first column through scheduled programs and our Career Services programs and Akron Bar Association events. Check out The Career Connection calendars. We have many great programs planned for fall! Also, visit the [Akron Bar Association](#). Student membership is free! These events are great ways to connect with someone who does what you want to do and who may have had some similar experiences in school.

Dealing with grades that were not what you hoped.

Recognize the challenge, then work on the problem.

There is a managing partner at a prestigious Cleveland-based firm that I have met with. Interestingly, the firm this alum now runs rejected him when he interviewed there after graduation because they thought his grades were too weak. He discovered, as have many others, that once you have practiced for a few years, no one cares what your grades were. They care about the work you have done in practice. The key is to be resilient, knowing that grades may

affect your choices now and at graduation, but they do not dictate your career and the options you will have as you gain experience and build a reputation.

For starters, don't hide from your grades. You don't need to share them with your classmates, but you want to tap into the resources the school has to offer from ASP, and your professors, to the CSO and beyond.

Academics – Succeeding in law school as a 2L!

The first step is thinking about what did and didn't work in your 1L year and then changing your approach in a way that incorporates new strategies while improving on the ones you keep. The old cliché is true; success in law school is really about “working smarter” and not just “working harder.” For example, some people find being part of a study group helps to drive them to study longer and in a more focused way. For others, study aids can make all the difference, from commercial outlines to study guides, and from flash cards to hornbooks. In all cases, a little expert advice and guidance at the start can make all the difference.

The place to start? Akron Law's Academic Success Program is here to help you!

Careers – finding a great gig, no matter your grades and beyond OCI.

Like we said above, grades may affect where you start your career, but they do not decide where you finish. So, while improving your grades matters, you also need to embrace where you are academically and put a plan together for what to do next. If this seems like a huge question, it is; but it is also one that is probably a lot easier to work through than you imagine. The first thing is to come see us in the CSO so we can set a time to meet and figure out where you are and where you want to go. You should also look at the Developing a Career Strategy section below, where we walk you through a step-by-step approach to developing a plan.

While some firms, especially the bigger ones, may limit applicants to the top 25% of the class, they do not represent a majority of legal employers. It is also essential to remember that only 10% to 15% of all jobs come through OCI, meaning that 85% to 90% of jobs are found in some other way. ***So, apply for OCIs, but don't stop there.*** Now is the time to take advantage of all the other ways to find the position you really want. Best of all, the time you spend exploring options and meeting people helps build the network of connections you need for success, no matter where you ultimately launch your career.

REMEMBER 85% OF JOBS DON'T COME THROUGH OCI.

5 Reasons to Visit Career Services TODAY

1. **Time is your friend, until it is not.** You need to get started in your search now. What you may think of as waiting a week or two, we think of as losing a week or two. We know the end of the school year, much less graduation, seems incredibly far away, but it is not. While we want you to focus on classes and studying, we also want you to come see us today. And while sooner is WAY better, if you suddenly realize it is May and you don't have a plan for summer and never came to see us, we are not mad at you, and will not hold it against you. We promise!
2. **You don't need to know the right question, much less the answer.** Lots of students don't come into the CSO or go to see their faculty because they don't know what to ask, how to express what they are feeling, or they feel their question is too small or silly. If this is you, then you MUST come in and see us. Turns out that Dean O'Brien has a lot of experience and training, including knowing a lot of the questions worth asking and how to help you figure out the ones you didn't even know you wanted to ask yourself.
3. **Experience eclipses grades quickly.** Remember the story about our alum who's now the managing partner of the same firm that rejected him when he applied to work there after school? You would be surprised how many alumni have told us the same tale of their career success. We are not saying it is easy, but if you are serious and committed to a particular career

you can make it happen. We may be looking for a side door instead of the front door, charting a path that takes you in another direction now but that you can bend back toward the gig you had always envisioned.

4. **Don't ignore the opportunity you never knew you wanted.** In other words, while you want to focus your efforts, be willing to be surprised by a gig that at first glance seems totally wrong, not what you wanted and, in an industry you know nothing about. It might turn out that your thinking is driven by never having been exposed to that kind of career option.
5. **What you think you want and what you really want may be totally different things.** The majority of your classmates going to large firms will not be there five years after graduation. Most will leave because they want a better work/life balance, they see they can charge their clients less and make more money by joining a small firm, they decide to go in-house, or they decide to apply what they have learned in a whole new way beyond traditional law practice. Most of our grads end up in small-medium law firms, and are very busy.

...OK, maybe 6 reasons to visit? We missed you over the summer!

Developing a Career Strategy Customized for You

Personal and Professional Interests – What you want to do and why!

Maybe you always knew what you wanted to do after law school. Maybe you had no idea when you came to Akron Law for the first day of classes. In either case, there is a really good chance that you have changed your mind. The start of your second year is a good time to pause for a moment and think about what you have learned, what motivates you and where you want to go. Whatever brought you to law school, no matter your grades and regardless of what you want to do, there is probably a way to get there. The route may just be a little less direct than you imagined.

Below are some tools to help you think this through, plus Alisa and Alecia, along with the rest of the staff and faculty, are here to help.

1. Take five minutes and picture yourself 20 years from now, in the heart of your career. Don't worry about the job title yet, just picture your typical day and what you do and ask a few broad questions like: What are you wearing at work? Do you see yourself in an airport or hotel most of the time, or commuting from home to an office? Do you work from home? What time does your day start and end, or does it? Do you see yourself

spending your off hours with your colleagues from the office, with your family, or maybe playing in a band?

2. Okay, with the image in your mind, let's think about what motivates you. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, so trust yourself. Look at the list below and rank them by saying "The most important thing to me is..."
 - a) **Geography** – the community or region I will live in. If this is a priority, can you identify the specific place, like Cleveland, DC or New York? If it is not that specific then is there a region, like Midwest or the Rockies?
 - b) **Work/Life Balance** – a balance between my time spent working and my personal time with friends and family. If this is a priority, then think about what that balance looks like. How many hours a week do you see spending working versus doing the other things that matter to you, like coaching your kid's soccer team, playing competitive tennis or learning tai chi?
 - c) **Career Field** – the field that I practice/work within. If this is your priority, what is the law practice or other career field that drives you? Maybe it is commercial litigation or prosecution, maybe it's M&A or tax. Maybe it is sports management, business consulting, politics or international relations.
 - d) **Cause** – serving the cause I believe in. If this is your priority, what is that cause? The way to distinguish this from Career Field is that if you are cause-oriented, the actual title, role you play is secondary to the mission. Maybe you are committed to a needy population, like the homeless or veterans. Maybe your calling is in the arts or healthcare for the poor. In any case, the cause is more important than your title, and you are as content to serve the cause by becoming an executive director or policy researcher as by practicing law in the traditional sense.
 - e) **Culture** – the organizational culture I work in and how I interact with colleagues. Do you envision working on your own or collaborating with others? Do you like having autonomy or are you the kind of person that needs a clear set of directives coming from a well-established hierarchy? Is your ideal environment a little more raucous or do you prefer a quieter office? Understanding the environment and social structure of your ideal working environment will help you identify a culture that enables you to succeed professionally and personally.
3. Now you need to order the priorities. The key here is to make a choice about which is first, then second, then third and so on. Think hard about the ranking but trust your gut. Once you know your priorities, it makes the rest of your planning a whole lot easier. You should also keep in mind that just because one priority is ranked higher than the other, it does not mean you ignore the lower one. Instead, think of this as a framework you can use to answer the more specific questions about what to do now, where to invest your time and efforts this fall, this year, and beyond.

The Plan – Making and executing a plan to get you where you want to be!

Time to take all this thinking and turn it into a plan you can act on. The first step is probably setting up a meeting with us, if you haven't already. We can help you work through the strategy development part, putting together the plan then executing it.

Now take a look at your priorities. What did you rank first? Write it down below. Underneath, you want to make a list that defines what that priority means for you.

For example, if your first priority is Geography and your second is Career Field, your list might look like this:

Priority 1 – Geography

1. Akron
2. Cleveland
3. Canton

Priority 2 – Career Field

1. Labor Law
2. Commercial Litigation
3. General Litigation
4. Insurance Defense
5. Family Law

Now we know where to look, and what to look for: attorneys in Northeast Ohio who practice labor law. You can refine that further by adding your analysis of the other priority areas, and even adding in new ones. The point is to rank them so you know what you want to focus on first.

Ok, here is the hard part. You need to look in Akron for firms with labor law practices and the lawyers who are in those practices, listing out the first 10 of those lawyers you want to meet. When you are thinking about who makes the list, look at big and small firms, boutiques and shops with a general practice that includes labor law. Don't avoid someone because you think their firm would not consider you, but don't ignore smaller or less well-known firms. Also, while the senior partner in charge may be a good choice, there may be a good reason to meet with the third-year associate instead. Pick the one you think you can connect with and who has the greatest value over time.

No matter how you order your priorities, the same basic process applies. It will help you get a clear picture of what you want and what matters to you most. This

will let you focus on executing your plan in the most efficient and effective way possible. Also, this does not mean you ignore things that come your way unexpectedly. If there is an opportunity that you see come available that you think might be of interest, you can use this framework to consider it and decide if you want to go after it.

Executing the Plan- Translating your plan into action.

Ok, we are almost there! Put the top 10 list (of attorneys to meet) into a spreadsheet so you can track your progress, the employer's name, contact info, address, date contacted, date followed up and any notes. Begin sending letters/emails to your 10 contacts. A sample outreach/networking letter is included on the next page.

In a week, as you promised in your letter, you are going to call the folks you sent letters/emails to the week before with the goal of setting up a meeting over coffee in or near their office. Our recommendation is to send 1-2 letters per week so that you can manage your follow-up. Then you add two new names to the list and send letters to #3 and #4. Then you repeat the process each week. Even if you took ten weeks off for vacation and finals, you will have still managed to reach out to more than 80 people – an amazing result for a very small commitment of time and effort.

When you meet with attorneys, ask about them, what they do, how they got there, why they chose their firm or practice area or industry, or what they wish they had known on day one that would have helped them. If you meet them at their office, make sure you thank them and be incredibly polite to the staff, including the receptionist. If you are in their personal office, look around and see what it might say about them, what mementos they have and where it might indicate a common interest or something worth asking about. And after the meeting, be it on the phone or in person, send them a brief thank you note.

Even if you ultimately find your job in some other way, you have established a network of some of the top folks who do what you want to do, some of whom will doubtless become important mentors and contacts in practice. Put simply, you have already made the kinds of connections most third and fourth-year lawyers are still struggling to put together.

SAMPLE LETTER TO NETWORKING CONTACT

[INSERT CUSTOMIZED LETTERHEAD]

October 17, 2024

Donovan Mitchell, Esq.
Wine and Gold, LLC
123 Fourth Street
Akron, OH 44444

Mr. Mitchell:

I am currently a second-year student at the University of Akron School of Law in Akron, Ohio interested in pursuing a career in Criminal Law in the Akron area. Through a search of our alumni database *[or if through another network contact, state the individual's name]*, I learned that you practice in this field, and I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about your career.

The combination of my work experience and educational background demonstrates my strong interest in Criminal Law. After completing my undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice, I spent five years working as a bailiff for Summit County Court. As a law student, I have taken Evidence and Criminal Law, and I will participate in Akron Law's re-entry clinic program next spring. Additionally, I worked as an intern at the Stark County Prosecutor's Office last summer, and the practical experience I gained there only increased my desire to become a criminal law attorney. I am confident that I would benefit from your advice, as both an Akron Law alum and a practitioner in the X area, as I continue to plan for a career in Criminal Law.

I understand that you are very busy and respect your time. Accordingly, I will follow up with you in a week to confirm you received this letter and to speak with you about arranging a brief meeting at your convenience. Thank you very much for your time and consideration of this request. I look forward to meeting with you and hearing more about your work.

Best regards,

Law Student