

Most Typical Alternative Careers for Lawyers Nationwide

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What advice do you give a student or alumnus who wants to find an alternative career in Washington, D.C.? Boston? Chicago? San Francisco? Do you know what it takes to be a lobbyist in D.C.? An investment banker in New York? A studio executive in Los Angeles?

We set out to conduct an informal survey of NALP law school members to learn what they found were the most typical alternative careers among their alumni. Interestingly, patterns developed within the discrete NALP regions, leading us to reformulate our original query. We found ourselves asking, instead, what are the most typical alternative careers found within each NALP region? This article lists the most common non-legal or quasi-legal careers found and briefly identifies resources that will help your alumni research these job opportunities.

Mid-Atlantic Region

You guessed it ... government, lobbying, and “Hill” jobs were the trend among the Mid-Atlantic Region. The logical thought when an alumnus says they want to do government-related work is to send them to Washington, D.C. Here is a short list of resources to pass along to them. Hopefully this will help both students and counselors in the journey to obtain these types of jobs. Newspapers that include job listings: *The Hill* (www.hillnews.com) and *Roll Call* (www.roll-call.com). Brubach Enterprises issues a bi-weekly listing of jobs in public relations, government affairs, legislation, print, and broadcast journalism on Capitol Hill and in non-profits, corporations, and federal agencies

(www.brubach.com). Non-partisan résumé and cover letter collection offices for both the House and Senate are *House Resume Referral Service* (www.house.gov) and the *Senate Placement Office* (202) 224-9167. The Senate also has a Job Hotline at (202) 228-JOBS. Remember also that party campaign committees, lobbying agencies, and government agencies are excellent places to look for these types of jobs.

Midwest Region

Midwestern schools reported a wealth of varied fields for alumni seeking alternative careers — no one field dominates the landscape. According to Liz Fenner at Loyola University’s Chicago School of Law, this may be because the market is “more diversified” in the Midwest. Schools in the Midwest boasted alumni who have obtained jobs in law school or higher education administration, law firm administration, alternative dispute resolution, investment analysis, non-profit administration, government affairs, and human relations. Alumni find jobs in industries as diverse as banking, real estate, insurance, technology, media, and sports. They seek jobs as compliance officers, fundraisers, screenwriters, or litigation consultants. Often the presence of a unique alternative career path for graduates coincides with a specialized degree program offered by the law school’s university. For instance, some University of Iowa law students take advantage of the university’s well-regarded playwriting program and use their J.D. degrees to enter the entertainment industry as a screenwriter with an edge.

Northeast Region

Northeastern schools reported trends of careers in the consulting, corporate, banking, and investment worlds. Colleagues from New York and Massachusetts schools including Hofstra, NYU, Syracuse, Western New England College of Law, and Cardozo said that their alums have gone on to become human resource managers, financial planners, business owners and managers, investment bankers, and contracts and compliance administrators. Here are some job search tools for those interested in pursuing these types of careers: www.megalaw.com and www.findlaw.com provide job listings, lists of associations, and practice area information; www.bloomberg.com allows you to research the consulting, finance, and legal industries and offers job search and interviewing tips as well as job listings. Additionally, the West Employer Directory can perform searches for non-traditional employers such as corporations, consulting, and banking firms. The *Vault Guides* to investment management, investment banking, and consulting careers are also helpful resources.

Southeast Region

Our colleagues throughout the Southeast report that their alumni are pursuing opportunities in banking and real estate development and that many of their graduates make the move to Washington, D.C., to pursue lobbying and political internships. NALP members in Florida such as Liz Stack at the University of Miami and Sharon Booth at Nova Southeastern indicate that their schools see budding entrepreneurs in their J.D./MBA programs who endeavor to start their own businesses.

The most prevalent alternative career cited in this region was education, at all levels from elementary school to law school. Graduates interested in elementary or secondary education are advised to pursue their credential in a more traditional manner, or check local school districts for emergency credentialing programs. After practicing for sev-

eral years and developing a particular expertise, graduates can also look into positions at community colleges (where a Ph.D. is not necessarily required), adjunct positions at universities, and positions of all kinds at law schools. Some key resources are the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* online job board (<http://chronicle.com/jobs/>), the *Nonprofit Sector Yellow Book* for contact information for colleges and universities, and the web sites of school districts and institutions of higher education.

West/Rocky Mountain Region

From Lewis & Clark down to the University of San Diego, non-profit work is one of the most prevalent alternative career choices in the West/Rocky Mountain Region. Specifically, alumni are pursuing positions as executive directors and development directors, and at all levels of non-profit administration. Also popular in this region are alternative careers in human resources and financial planning. According to Graham Sherr at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, "big ticket" financial planning is popular in the Southern California area, specifically to cater to the region's ample supply of athletes and celebrities.

The prevalence of the entertainment industry in this region leads to another popular alternative career choice, studio executive. But, like all things entertainment, obtaining these positions is highly dependent on effective networking and should start at the most basic level with extensive informational interviewing. While still in law school, students who are interested in studio work should pursue a studio internship to start developing connections and knowledge of the entertainment industry. Current students and alumni must be prepared to take an unpaid position with a studio to get their foot in the door. Additionally, many studio executives practiced law for many years prior to obtaining their studio positions. In the same way that many in-house lawyers obtain their positions by starting as outside counsel for an organization, lawyers who represent studios may be offered opportunities to move in-house but must make concerted efforts

in order to move in more of a management or finance direction.

Alternatively, some studio executives start out as talent agents. Alumni interested in pursuing this path are strongly encouraged to research talent agencies with agent training programs. To find contact information for studios, entertainment law firms and talent agencies, take a look at *The Hollywood Reporter Blu-Book* and the *U.S. Directory of Entertainment Employers*. Additionally, Entertainment Media Consultants publishes *The Music & Entertainment Industry Internship Guide*, designed for undergraduate and graduate students. Two good web sites for finding jobs in all areas of entertainment are www.showbizjobs.com and www.entertainmentcareers.net.

As you can see, alumni at NALP member schools are pursuing interesting and unique alternative careers with their J.D. degrees. Stay tuned for more *Bulletin* articles from NALP's Alternative Careers Committee that break down some of these more "typical" alternative careers and tell you how alumni can land one of these coveted positions.

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