



Summer Associates Survey

Preparation and Selection

June 2024

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Background

Law360 Pulse's fourth annual Summer Associates Survey explores the process of pairing law students with summer associateships at law firms. In this report, we analyze the steps law students take to prepare for this process, the assistance they had, the basic details of their associateships if they have already secured one, and more. This is the first of a two-part report, with the second part focused on the experiences law students had at their associateships. That survey will begin collecting responses later in the summer. The Summer Associates Survey forms part of the expanded series of surveys at Law360 Pulse, a data-driven news service focused on the business of law.

Methodology

Law360 Pulse conducted the first of our two-part 2024 Summer Associates Survey from March 12 to May 13, 2024. The survey received 587 responses from current law students at 149 different schools, of whom 248 were in their first year, 234 in their second year and 94 in their third year. Nine others were either enrolled part-time or in an evening program. Among participants, 55% were female, 41% were male, and 2% nonbinary, with an additional 2% preferring not to identify their gender. Some percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding, while other percentages may exceed 100 because respondents were allowed to select multiple answers. The survey was anonymous and will not connect any individual response with any person.

Introduction

By **Xavier Chauvris, Jack Collens**
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Law360 Pulse

One of the hallmark experiences of many top law students is the summer associateship. Students who obtain an associateship can expect to be well compensated for their work and turn strong performance into a job offer for after graduation. Competition is fierce and the stakes are high for those undertaking the process of securing these coveted positions.

As firms are highly selective in choosing their summer associates, law students must be strategic in how they apply. In many cases, students file bids for interviews with firms, with firms then conducting on-campus interviews, or OCIs. But this was not always the case. Some students said their schools did not use a bidding process. One relied on a website with job listings posted by attorneys and courts, along with weekly emails of available jobs. It is unclear how common this approach is, but a substantial number of students indicated their schools no longer use the traditional bid system.

In choosing where to apply, students in our survey demonstrated a sophisticated calculus. On one hand, students prioritized practical concerns such as geography, getting a chance to gain valuable experience, and practice area. However, in open-ended comments, many also lauded their chosen firms for their openness, for their culture, and because interviewers were genuinely interested in them as candidates and honest about the firm's advantages and challenges.

For those who did secure a summer associate

As firms are highly selective in choosing their summer associates, law students must be strategic in how they apply.

position, pay was highly variable, with a mean of just over \$28,000 for the entire summer and a median of around \$32,000. The largest group of respondents, however, made somewhere in the \$40,000s, equivalent to 10-12 weeks of pay for first-year associates according to the scale set by Cravath Swaine & Moore LLP in 2023.

While second-year students are traditionally the participants in summer associate programs, our survey found a number of 1L students also seeking associateships. According to our findings, though, the learning curve is steep, and 2L students have greater awareness of helpful resources and likely more professional development to help them through the process.

Those not working in a summer associate program – because they either did not secure an offer or they opted out of the process – had a variety of other options. The most common alternative summer plans included taking summer classes, interning or working for a government agency, and clerking for a judge.

1. The Most Desired Firms

Kirkland & Ellis LLP once again took the top spot on this year's list of law students' preferred destinations for summer associateships, with Latham & Watkins LLP in second, both for the third year in a row. Jones Day, Sidley Austin LLP and Holland & Knight LLP round out the top five.

Four of these five firms were also listed as the ones to which students most frequently applied

for on-campus interview bids: Jones Day, Kirkland, Sidley and Holland & Knight, followed at fifth place by Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP.

Students also recognized many of the same firms as standouts in their marketing endeavors. Kirkland, Latham, Sidley, and Jones Day once again led the top five, with White & Case LLP joining the group.

If you could choose to do your summer associateship program at any law firm, which would be your top three firms?

RANK	FIRM
1	Kirkland
2	Latham
3	Jones Day
4	Sidley
5	Holland & Knight
6	McDermott
6	Skadden
8	Cravath
8	White & Case
10	Covington
10	Gibson Dunn
10	Morgan Lewis
13	Sullivan & Cromwell
14	DLA Piper

RANK	FIRM
14	Faegre Drinker
14	Husch Blackwell
14	K&L Gates
14	King & Spalding
14	McGuireWoods
14	Perkins Coie
14	Wachtell
14	Wilson Sonsini
23	Alston & Bird
23	Arnold & Porter
23	Greenberg Traurig
23	Willkie
23	WilmerHale

Which firm(s) did you list on your on campus interviewing bid?

RANK	FIRM
1	Jones Day
2	Kirkland
3	Sidley
4	Holland & Knight
5	Morgan Lewis
5	Skadden
7	Akin

RANK	FIRM
7	Gibson Dunn
7	McGuireWoods
10	Bradley Arant
10	Faegre Drinker
10	Nelson Mullins
10	Reed Smith
10	Ropes & Gray

Which firms really stood out to you in terms of marketing their summer programs?

RANK	FIRM
1	Kirkland
2	Latham
3	Sidley
4	Jones Day
5	White & Case
6	Skadden

RANK	FIRM
7	Faegre Drinker
7	Husch Blackwell
7	Morgan Lewis
10	Haynes Boone
10	McDermott
10	Vinson & Elkins



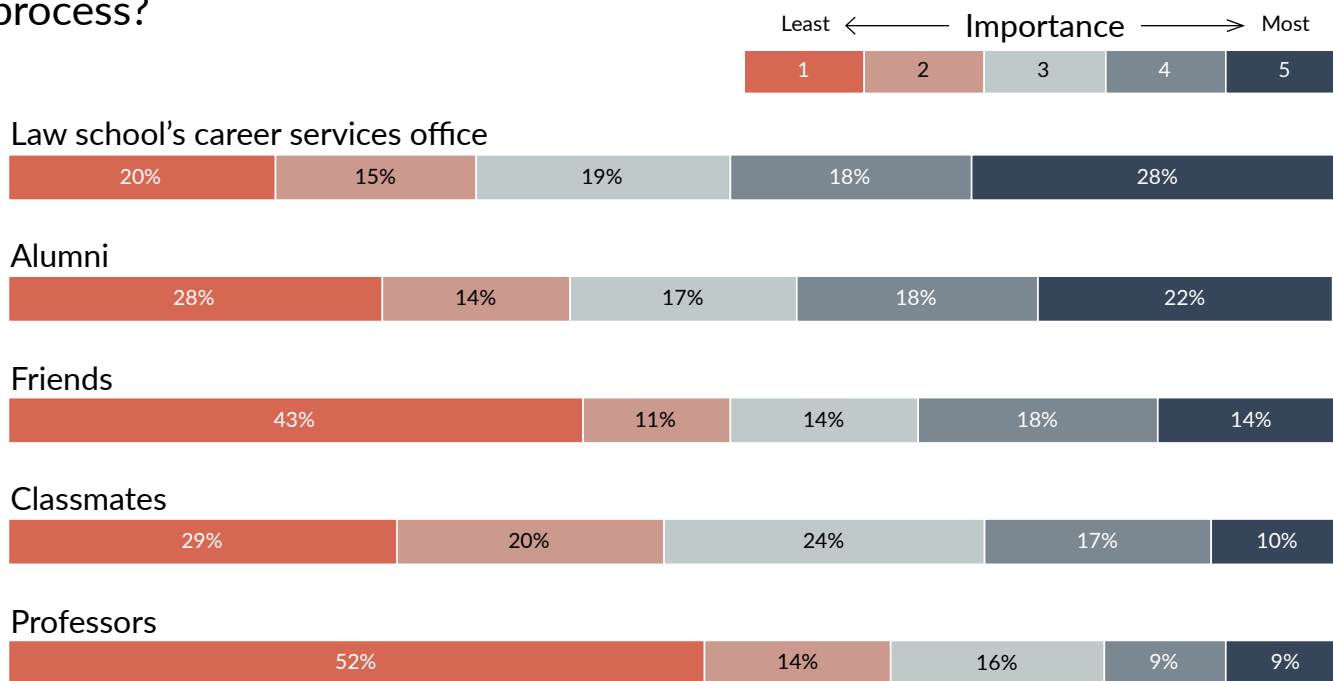
2. The Road to an Associateship

Students applied to an average of 14 firms. The average number of interviews awarded during early interview week was four. Of students who reported submitting at least one bid, 18% reported being granted zero interviews during early interview week.

To prepare for their applications and interviews, students turned to a number of resources for guidance. Sixty-two percent of students said their law schools held mock

summer interviews to help them through that arduous process, similar to previous years. Among other forms of assistance, the school's career services office was the most frequently cited as important – by 47% of respondents – while 41% cited alumni as an important resource. A fair portion also sought guidance from their friends and classmates. More than half of respondents said their professors were the least important resource during their application process.

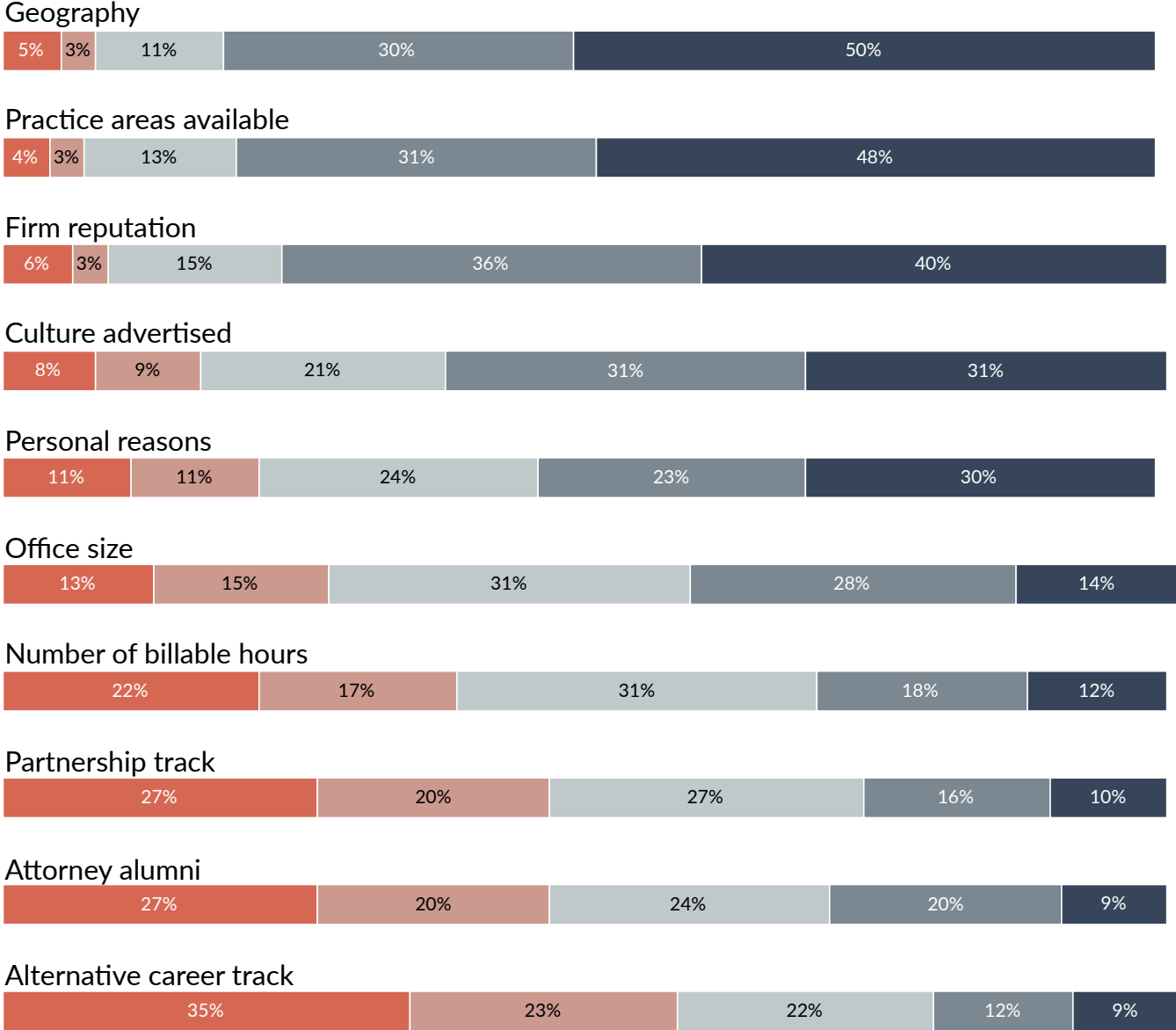
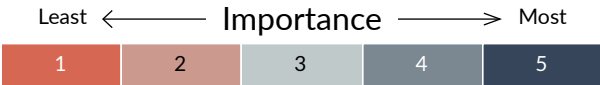
Whom did you rely on to guide you through the law firm selection process?



When deciding from among the possible associate programs to join, students considered a range of factors. As with last year, geography was the top consideration, with 50% of students rating it as their most important, followed closely by firms' practice areas at

48%, then firm reputation, advertised firm culture and personal reasons. Fewer than 15% of respondents listed office size, number of billable hours, attorney alumni and the availability of partnership and alternative career tracks as important factors in their decisions.

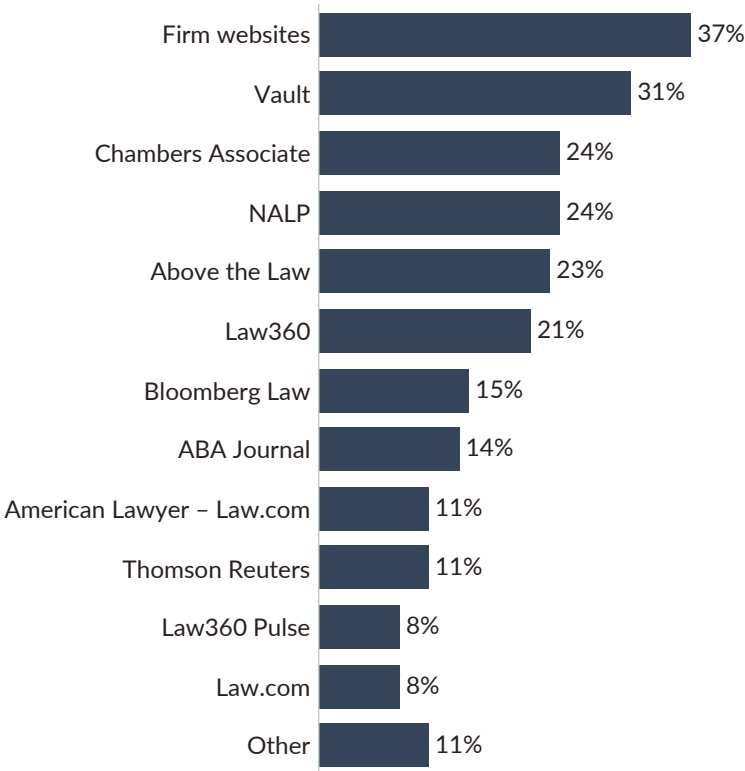
How much did the following criteria factor into your decision for choosing a law firm for your summer associateship?



Students also identified the resources they used to help them choose firms to include in their bid lists. Unsurprisingly, more than a third of students reported consulting the

firms' websites to help guide their decisions. Other top resources included Vault, Chambers Associates, the National Association for Law Placement, Above the Law and Law360.

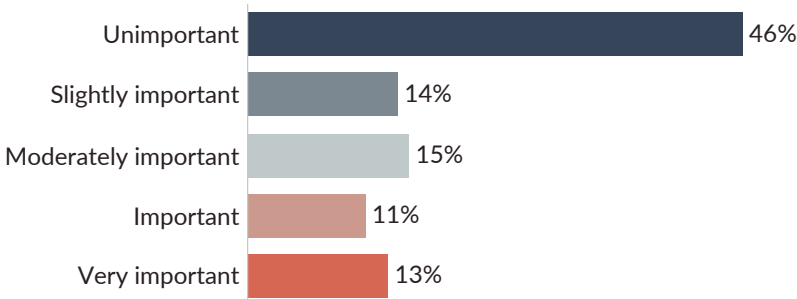
Which of the following resources did you use to help inform your decision?



Firms have mostly phased out the virtual programs that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 78% of respondents saying they had not encountered a firm that would allow them to report from a city other than where the associateship is based.

The students themselves did not appear to be hugely invested in having the option to work fully remotely: A majority – 61% – gave it little to no weight, compared to 25% for whom it was important or very important.

How important is it for you to have the option to report virtually to your associateship and not have to relocate to a different city?

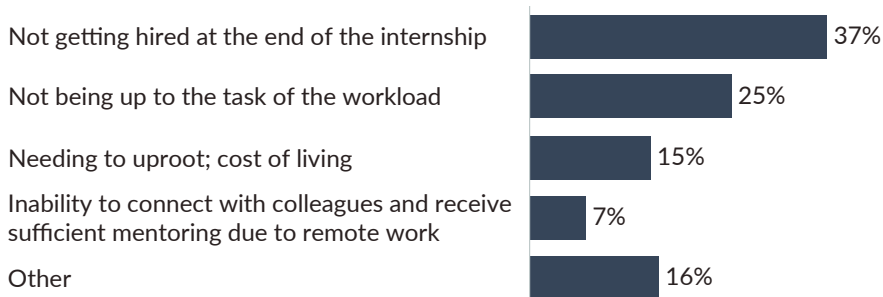


3. The Associateship

Students remain concerned about their future despite landing one of these coveted summer positions. When asked their biggest concern going into their program, 37% said they were most concerned about not being offered a full-time position after their summer internship ended. Another quarter expressed concern about not being able to keep up with their workload. Much smaller

portions were concerned about the cost of living and the challenges associated with remote work. In open-ended entries accounting for 16% of the respondent pool, students listed not liking their preferred practice area, not getting enough substantive work, and becoming “jaded” or not being interested in the practice of the law as some of their other concerns.

What is your biggest concern going into your summer internship?



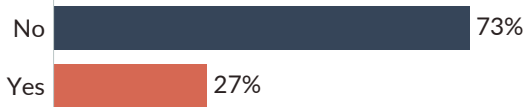
Those who secured a paid summer associateship by the time they took the survey reported their total pay. Respondents reported an average total pay of \$28,007, with a median of \$32,000, similar to last year’s figures of \$28,743 and \$35,000, respectively. Thirty-six percent of respondents reported earning less than \$20,000.

The Cravath scale sets the starting salary for first-year associates at \$225,000. For a 10-week associate program to match that scale,

summer interns would have to earn roughly \$43,000. A substantial share of respondents reported earning near this amount: 35% said they would be earning between \$40,000 and \$50,000.

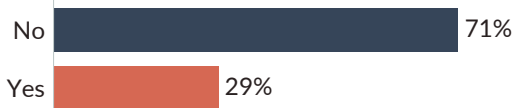
In what could potentially be a positive development for diversity and inclusion, 27% of students who identified as a minority believed they were interviewed as part of a quota system — still a fairly high portion, but down from 38% last year.

If you identify as a minority, do you believe that you have ever been the recipient of an interview intended to satisfy a quota, when the firm had little or no intention of bringing you on board?



Twenty-nine percent of those who were offered a contract said it included mandatory arbitration or nondisclosure agreements, similar to last year's 30%.

If you were offered a summer associateship, did the contract you received include mandatory arbitration agreements or nondisclosure agreements?



Law firms often provide employees — including summer associates — access to resources they would otherwise not have, even at their law schools. We asked students which resources they were most looking forward to having available. In addition to tools many schools do offer — Lexis, Westlaw, and Bloomberg Law — students mentioned AI tools, eDiscovery tools and PACER.

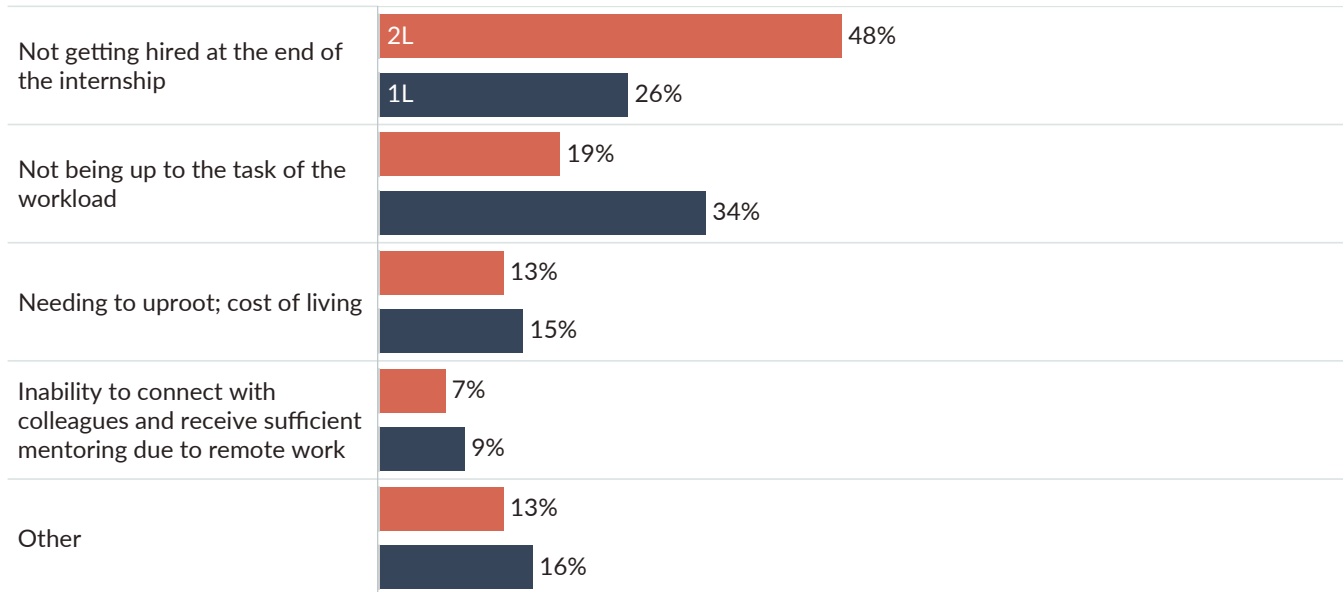


4. The Class Divide

Associateships for 1L students are comparatively rare. Still, 83% of the 1L students in our sample applied for at least one summer internship, compared to 93% of 2L students. Of those 1L students who applied, 26% received zero interviews, compared to only 10% of 2L students. By far the biggest concerns for both 1L and 2L

students were not being up to the task of the workload and not getting hired at the end of the internship. More than a third of 1L students say they are most concerned about their preparedness, whereas 2L students are more focused on their careers; nearly half say their biggest concern is not getting hired at the end of the internship.

What is your biggest concern going into your summer internship?



Perhaps reflecting their comparative inexperience, 1L students also reported relying more heavily on established resources at their law schools to prepare them for the application process. Thirty-six percent said their schools' career services office was the most important resource available for guidance, compared to only 23% of 2L students.

First- and second-year law students also consulted different resources when deciding which firms to apply to and, ultimately, accept an internship with. Second-year students relied heavily on firm sites, with 43% saying they used

the firms' own resources, compared to just 30% of first-year students. The more experienced cohort also reported greater usage of nearly every other resource, from Law360 to Vault, suggesting that 2L students are more prepared and perhaps even more likely to have an institutional system designed to prepare them for the summer associates application process.

Finally, it is clear that firms value the added experience of 2L students, as those interns made an average of \$30,778, well outpacing the \$21,481 earned by the average 1L student who secured a paid internship.

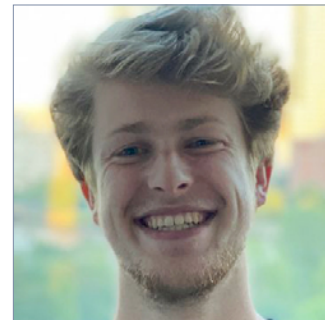
Meet the Team



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Questionnaire

What year of law school are you in?

- 1L
- 2L
- 3L
- 4L (part-time)
- Evening student

What law school are you attending?

How many firms did you apply to?

How many of those firms granted you an interview during early interview week?

Which firm(s) did you list on your on campus interviewing bid?

How did the firm you listed as the top choice in your bidding distinguish itself from the others you interviewed with?

How much did the following criteria factor into your decision for choosing a law firm for your summer associateship?

Select one for each option from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important)

- Geography
- Practice areas available
- Firm reputation
- Culture advertised
- Partnership track
- Alternative career track
- Attorney alumni
- Office size
- Number of billable hours you would have as an associate
- Personal reasons

If you could choose to do your summer associateship program at any law firm, which would be your top three firms?

Select up to three

Whom did you rely on to guide you through the law firm selection process?

Select one for each option from 1 (no reliance) to 5 (significant reliance)

- Professors
- Classmates
- Alumni who are currently working at firms
- Friends who are currently working at firms
- Law school's career services office

Did your law school prepare you with any mock summer interviews?

Select one

- Yes
- No

Which of the following resources did you use to help inform your decision?

Select all that apply

- ABA Journal
- Above the Law
- AM Law Litigation Daily
- American Lawyer - Law.com
- Bloomberg BNA
- Bloomberg Law
- Chambers Associate
- Connecticut Law Tribune
- Daily Business Review
- Daily Report Online
- Delaware Business Court Insider
- Delaware Law Weekly
- Firm websites
- How Appealing
- JD Supra
- JURIST – News – Legal News & Commentary
- Law.com
- Law360
- Law360 Pulse
- Law360 Tax Authority
- Legal Intelligencer
- Legaltech News
- LexBlog
- NALP
- National Law Journal
- National Law Journal - Law.com
- New Jersey Law Journal
- New York Law Journal

- SCOTUSblog
- Supreme Court Brief
- Texas Lawyer
- The Deal Pipeline
- The Litigation Daily
- The Recorder
- Thomson Reuters
- Vault
- Other (please specify)

Which statement is true of your summer associateship program?

- I am working remotely for my whole program
- I am working a mix of remotely and in person
- I am working in person at the firm's office for the whole program

On a scale of 1 to 5, how much would you say remote work has hindered your ability to network with attorneys at potential internship firms? (1=no hindrance, 5=big hindrance)

What is your biggest concern going into your summer internship?

- Inability to connect with colleagues and receive sufficient mentoring due to remote work
- Not being up to the task of the workload
- Not getting hired at the end of the internship
- Needing to uproot; cost of living
- Other (please specify)

While interviewing, did you encounter any firms that would allow you to report virtually from a different city than where the associateship is based?

- Yes
- No

How important is it for you to have the option to report virtually to your associateship and not have to relocate to a different city?

- Unimportant
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Important
- Very important

If you identify as a minority, do you believe that you have ever been the recipient of an interview intended to satisfy a quota, when the firm had little or no intention of bringing you on board?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Which firms really stood out to you in terms of marketing their summer programs?
Select up to three

If you were offered a summer associateship, did the contract you received include mandatory arbitration agreements or nondisclosure agreements?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If you didn't get a summer associateship this season, what is your backup plan?

How much are you being paid for your summer associateship in total?

Are there any legal technology, research tools or subscriptions unavailable at your law school that you are looking forward to potentially having access to at a firm?

At this point in your law school career, what practice area do you see yourself going into?

- Aerospace & Defense
- Appellate
- Asset Management
- Banking
- Bankruptcy
- Benefits
- Capital Markets
- Class Action
- Commercial Contracts
- Corporate
- Cybersecurity & Privacy
- Employment
- Energy
- Environmental
- Fintech
- Food & Beverage
- General Litigation
- Government Contracts
- Health Care

- Hospitality
- Immigration
- Insurance
- Intellectual Property
- International Arbitration
- International Trade
- Media & Entertainment
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Native American
- Personal Injury and Medical Malpractice
- Private Equity
- Product Liability
- Project Finance
- Real Estate
- Retail & E-Commerce
- Securities
- Sports & Betting
- Tax
- Technology
- Telecommunications
- Transportation
- Trials
- White Collar
- Other (please specify)

What is your gender?

- Select one
- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary
- Prefer not to identify

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