

The Pre-Law e-Newsletter from Pre-Professional Programs & Advising

Vol. 2, No. 4

Monday, October 27, 2008 – Sunday, November 2, 2008

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1. MESSAGE FROM ANA L. DROSCOSKI, ESQ.

Current Applicants: The first week in November is a great point to have your materials submitted. Submitting your applications close to this week affords law schools ample time to give them priority review. Hopefully most of you are wrapping up your applications!

Future Applicants: There is an info session on the Aitchison's Fellowship on Monday, October 27, 2008, with more information listed below under Program Announcements. The Fellowship is a great way to gain some internship/work experience - potentially in a legal setting - while earning a semester of academic credit in DC. Consider attending the session to learn more.

The focus of this edition is employment post-graduation and pre-law school. It includes an interview with an alumna who participated in a federal government paralegal program, as well as some general pointers on securing your own position. Hopefully it is helpful, generates some ideas, and points you in the right direction!

2. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: HONORS PARALEGAL INTERN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

The U.S. Department of Justice, Environment and Natural Resources Division is now accepting applications for the 2009 Honors Paralegal Intern Program.

The Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) is a 700 person organization with approximately 400 attorneys and nearly 300 legal support and administrative staff. As the largest environmental law firm in the country, ENRD has represented virtually every federal agency in courts nationwide.

The program is looking for 2008/2009 college graduates who have at least a 3.0 GPA, are organized, analytical, have strong research skills, and can work both independently and collaboratively. Program participants in the two year program receive both formal and on-the-job training and are mentored by an attorney. Duties of a paralegal include: administrative case preparation, trial support, cite checking, legal research utilizing Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw, etc. (Honor Paralegals will participate in extensive paralegal training once accepted).

The start date for the program will be around July 20, 2009, in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area.

To apply, please visit: <https://applicationmanager.gov>. After establishing your userID and password, use PH213594 as the Vacancy ID number, then follow the instructions to complete your application. The application process includes submitting a resume (be sure to include your GPA on your resume), an

unofficial school transcript, and completing an online questionnaire. For more information on the ENRD, visit: www.usdoj.gov/enrd.

Application deadline: February 28, 2009

3. INTERVIEW: GAYATRI PATEL (JHU '07), HONORS PARALEGAL INTERN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

Gayatri Patel* is a paralegal at the Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) at the Department of Justice (DOJ) in Washington, DC. ENRD is the largest environmental law firm in the country. ENRD represents and litigates on behalf of the United States in the following matters:

- Prevention and Clean Up of Pollution
- Environmental Challenges to Federal Programs and Activities
- Stewardship of Public Lands and Natural Resources
- Acquisition of Property for Federal Needs
- Wildlife Protection
- Indian Rights and Claims

Ms. Patel works in the Land Acquisition section at ENRD. She graduated from Johns Hopkins University in 2007 with a B.A. in Public Health Studies.

*In answering these questions, Ms. Patel is acting in her personal capacity as an alumna of Johns Hopkins University, and her answers do not reflect the views of the Department of Justice.

Questions

Describe a typical day as an Honors Paralegal Intern:

Well, there really is no typical day as a paralegal. In terms of hours, my day usually starts at 8:30 AM and ends around 6:00 PM. The tasks vary everyday. Paralegals are there to support the attorneys, so work generally consists of anything that helps attorneys prepare for trial. That consists of managing databases, drafting correspondence, doing research, and cite-checking briefs. The paralegals in our office are usually assigned to cases as they come to the section, so you really do get to see how cases develop from the very beginning. Most people think attorneys go to trial all the time, but it isn't the case, especially when you work on civil cases. I've been working at DOJ for a year now, and although I've been to court a few times for hearings or conferences with the judge, I still have yet to go to trial.

There is definitely some administrative work with the job, but you just have to have a positive attitude about it. Most entry-level jobs will require you to do some not-so-glamorous tasks. While I have to do some administrative tasks, I've also had the opportunity to do some really interesting things and work on cases that make national headlines. On one particular project, I developed materials to train paralegals and Assistant US Attorneys in condemnation law. I've traveled and conducted training sessions in US Attorney's offices in the Southern District of Texas and the Southern District of California. I've even gone to Puerto Rico for a case. I think each paralegal's experience depends on the type of projects that he/she is working on, as well as the section that he/she is working in. Some paralegals travel more than others. Some have more focused responsibilities. It really just depends on the cases and what you are willing to make of the experience.

What types of post-graduation opportunities did you research? How did you go about your search?

I was primarily looking for public interest jobs, with a specific environmental or health focus. I applied to a few consulting companies that do a lot of contracting for the government, various non-profits, and several government agencies. I ultimately chose to work for DOJ because I wanted to figure out if law school really was the right choice for me. Also, working for the Federal government appealed to me. Honestly, I think any job will prepare you for law school, but working as a paralegal, you really do get to see the day-to-day work of attorneys. There is no greater preparation than that.

For those students who are job-searching, I'd start by using all the resources that the Career Center has to offer. There were several books and websites that I utilized while visiting the center. Many of the books listed organizations and companies by cities, which was really helpful. I visited the websites and usually applied through the sites. I must have applied to 30+ jobs and probably only heard back from a handful. One thing I'd tell students is not to get frustrated. It's just part of the process. I also reached out to alumni and my friends who had already graduated to find out what my options were. Ask questions and do the research before you interview. I cannot stress that enough.

I found out about the Honors Paralegal Program at DOJ while attending a job recruiting fair in Washington, DC. I had heard about the fair from the Career Center. At the fair, I was able to speak with someone who worked in HR, as well as an Honors Paralegal who was working at the Department at the time. For current job-seekers, meeting representatives from companies and government agencies is a great way to express your interest in a position and to put a name with a resume. I would definitely suggest reaching out to people at these fairs, as well as contacting alumni and emailing them with your questions. Most people are usually very happy to talk about their jobs, so don't hesitate to talk to or email people.

What made you choose this particular position and has it met your expectations?

There were several different reasons why I chose to work at ENRD. I had already been thinking about law school, but was still unsure if that was the right decision. I knew that working at DOJ I would see firsthand what attorneys do and that I would get the opportunity to work on cases that would truly interest me. I also knew I wanted to work for a public interest organization. Hence, I only applied to the paralegal position at the Justice Department and didn't apply for positions at private law firms. My interest lies in public interest law, and I knew I wanted to be exposed to that. I also knew I wanted to work for an organization that had some type of environmental or health focus.

The Honors Paralegal program is specifically designed for recent college graduates and had several benefits that attracted me to the position. One of my favorite aspects of the program has been the brown-bag sessions where I and the other paralegals have the opportunity to meet and hear different attorneys who work for the Division talk about the cases that they've worked on. This month we're hearing a presenter talk about international environmental issues. The following month, another attorney will discuss environmental justice cases. Also, each paralegal in the program is paired with a mentoring attorney. They really do make an effort to make this not just a job, but a learning experience. Also, there are definitely perks to working for the Federal government. The hours are great. I can also take advantage of the alternate work schedule that allows me to take an extra day off every other week.

What do you think you have gained from this position and from taking time off before law school? Given the choice, would you do it again?

Absolutely. I think everyone should take time off before law school or graduate school. Personally, I wanted a break after college. If I had just gone straight to school, I don't think I would have taken advantage of the opportunities that law school has to offer. A lot of people just jump into a decision to attend law school without taking the time to explore what else is out there. I think that's okay for some people, but for me I wanted to be sure. I also think time off from school makes you appreciate the classes more because you can relate it to your working experience. Now that I've taken some time off, I have a better understanding of what I want to do. There's also definitely a lot of personal growth that comes along with working a real job, too.

Contact Information

If you would like to learn more about being a paralegal, the Honors Paralegal Program, or have additional questions for Ms. Patel, you may contact her directly via email at gayatri07@gmail.com. For more information about ENRD and other division related activities, please visit: <http://www.usdoj.gov/enrd/>

4. TAKING TIME OFF BEFORE LAW SCHOOL: A FEW IDEAS

Whether you are unsure about applying to law school or know that you want to work for at least a year or two before law school, taking a break between undergrad and graduate school is a great option for

anyone. Assuming you decide to take a break, how do you line up a job or other productive opportunity to commence once you have graduated?

The first step should be to utilize the school's resources: go to the Career Center to begin your research. Meet with a career counselor for better direction. Be sure to access and research the following links, which are great for public interest work, including non-profits, NGOs & the government: www.idealists.org & www.usajobs.com. Another great website is www.indeed.com, which pools job search engines and listings from all over the internet. And, of course, there is our Office website, which offers several listings, including law firms with defined paralegal programs: <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/law/internship.html>

Consider the breadth of your interests and try to pursue opportunities in as many of those interests as possible: cast the net wide! Keep in mind that what you do in the interim does not have to be law related. Many graduates pursue Teach for America, AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Fulbrights, and various other practical and scholarly opportunities. Some even teach English abroad. However, working in a legal setting will permit you a glimpse of what may be on the horizon in practice as an attorney.

Remember to utilize alumni, friend & familial contacts. If you know someone who is associated with or working in a field that you are interested in – reach out and get in touch with them! You will need to research and apply to many opportunities to secure one job.

Know that finding a preferred position can be challenging, but is accomplishable with effort.

5. UPCOMING PRE-LAW MEETINGS AND PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Aitchison Fellowship and Accelerated MA Information Session

Location: Maryland 217

Date: Monday, October 27, 2008

Time: 12:00p to 1:00p

Description: Info session on spring semester Aitchison Fellowship and one year, accelerated Master's in Government Program, both in Washington, DC. Learn more about the one semester Fellowship that allows you to earn 15 undergraduate credits while making connections and gaining real-world experience - possibly in a legal setting - in DC!

LSAT Administration for 2008/2009

Location: On campus, Hodson 110 - check with LSDAS for additional testing locations

Date: Saturday, December 6, 2008 & Saturday, February 7, 2009

Time: Registration begins at 8:30a - consult with LSDAS for all controlling details

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STAFF IN THE OFFICE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS AND ADVISING

Ana L. Droskoski, J.D., Assistant Director, who advises Pre-Law students:

Walk-ins: Monday/Thursday 10:00a - 11:30a

Appointments: Monday/Thursday 2:00p - 4:00p

Wednesday 10:00a - 11:30a & 2:00p - 3:00p

David Verrier, Ph.D., Director, who advises Pre-Health students:

Walk-ins: Wednesday/Friday 10:00a - 12:00p

Kirsten Kirby, M.S.Ed., Assistant Director, who advises Pre-Health students:

Walk-ins: Tuesday 10:00a - 12:00p & Wednesday 1:30p - 3:30p

The Administrative Coordinators are available to answer questions and schedule appointments:

Lena Harding, Administrative Secretary, [lhardin7@jhu.edu](mailto:lhardin7@jhu.edu) 410-516-6743

For students whose last name begins with A-G, contact Ms. Harding.

Carolyn Mae Krause, Administrative Coordinator, ckrause@jhu.edu 410-516-6744  
For students whose last name begins with H-O, contact Mrs. Krause.

LaTonia Sanders, Administrative Coordinator, ladytee@jhu.edu 410-516-4140  
For students whose last name begins with P-Z, contact Mrs. Sanders.

Angie Decker, Office Manager and Staff Supervisor, decker@jhu.edu

Please feel free to use the resource library between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. everyday or visit our website <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/> for additional information.