Employers do not expect 2Ls to be masters of the law. Employers hire law students based on their potential to contribute to the organization. We have analyzed years of feedback with interviewers and employers, alumni and students, and have synthesized their assessment into the table below. In sum, potential is derived from what you have accomplished and how you communicate.

**Key Factors Influencing Hiring Decisions by Legal Employers of Law Students**

**Factors Fixed Before and During 1L Year (more or less)**
- Academic performance as a 1L
- Advanced technical degrees or training
- Demonstrated initiative and work as a leader
- Law school reputation
- Life experiences
- Maturity
- Relevant work experience

**Factors with Developmental Potential During Law School and Beyond**
- Advanced interpersonal and conversational skills
- Articulated interest in the particular employer
- Communicated excitement and passion about the practice of law (or of employer’s field/industry/cause)
- Demonstrated “ownership mentality” and work ethic, leadership and initiative
- Logical commitment to the community (geography)
- Sophisticated perspective about the complexities of practice
- Substantive knowledge and skills
- Writing ability, legal and general

**Reasons cited for not hiring candidates who have some of the Fixed Factors**
- “I would not be confident leaving the candidate with a client.”
- “The person does not pass the ‘plane-ride to China’ test – he had nothing to say.”
- “The person did not seem interested in our organization or our mission.”
- “I perceived a lack of focus/enthusiasm.”
- “It doesn’t make sense why the person wants to live in our city.”

**Reasons cited for hiring Duke students who have fewer of the Fixed Factors**
- “It’s clear the candidate is passionate about our practice.”
- “She has shown she has the ‘ownership work ethic’.”
- “He writes extremely well.”
- “The person has very strong interpersonal skills and communicates well.”
- “I was highly impressed with this student’s initiative and leadership in law school.”
- “He clearly researched us beyond the website and had a clear commitment to our city.”
- “I found the student to be enthusiastic and engaging.”
- “The student had an impressive substantive understanding of our issues.”
The key insight students have offered in the past is the importance of those factors with “Developmental Potential.” The “Fixed Factors” are indeed closely scrutinized by employers and some employers may base decisions primarily on them; however, many employers take a more holistic view of students and consider all the factors in their decision-making. This means that every Duke student who commits to enhancing his or her Developmental Factors will, we are confident, have the opportunity to decide among appealing offers for next summer and beyond. While the factors are not in rank order as each employer weighs them differently, please use the above as a benchmark of your continuing professional development and feel free to contact any member of the CPDC Team if we can assist you as both your summer and career search progress.

Sincerely,
The Career & Professional Development Center