Federal Government Jobs:

Finding and Securing Summer and Permanent Positions

Sponsored by the Career Center and the Public Interest and Pro Bono Office
Where are the lawyers? 
(and the jobs)

- Most in executive branch
- Some in independent agencies
- Some in legislative branch
- Some in judicial branch
Types of Work

- **Litigation**
  DOJ & US Attorney, some agencies, some with coordinate jurisdiction

- **Regulatory**
  Create & implement rules and regulations

- **Advisory**
  Advise and counsel, congressional inquiry, FOIA etc.

- **Public Policy**
  Look beyond attorney positions. PMF opportunity.
Competitive Service vs. Exempted Service

- **Competitive Service** - majority of federal employees, hired through OPM. Open positions on USAjobs.gov

- **Exempted Service** - ALL attorney positions. Agencies may hire without using OPM (USAjobs.gov)

*Only 20% of attorney job openings in the federal government are advertised.*
Post-graduate Positions

- Direct Hiring (lawyer and non-lawyer positions)
- Honors Programs (some agencies have preference for students that spent a summer with them or lawyers who have done clerkships)
- Presidential Management Fellows
Summer Positions

- Summer Legal Intern Positions (SLIP positions): summer equivalent to an Honors Program
- Volunteer Interns (many unadvertised, informal)
- May or may not be paid.
Some of the BEST Resources

- Government Honors & Internship Guide - http://www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm
- USA Jobs - http://www.usajobs.gov/
- PSLawNet.org – collection of resources, available to all Duke students via Duke subscription
- Westlaw - searchable database of federal agencies

TIP: ALWAYS go to agency websites too.
Top 10 Agencies for Hiring

Partnership for Public Service
http://data.wherethejobsare.org/wtja/field/1489

- DOJ
- Department of Homeland Security
- Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)
- Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
- Treasury
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Federal Trade Commission
- Social Security Administration
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Labor

Also DOD and Veteran’s Affairs.
Timing of Applications

- **Summer positions:**
  - Honors program: start early in fall semester
  - Volunteer programs: can be into late spring
  - Some agencies attend OCI at Duke

- **Post graduate positions:**
  - Honors program: start early in fall semester
  - Direct Hire: start in spring OR after bar
  - Some agencies attend OCI at Duke
The Unpublished Job Market

- Networking
  (Seek out professors with connections)
- TARGETED mailings
  (Suggest Regional Directors and Duke alumni)
- Cover letter: mission of agency, yours skills and why you want to be there

Use EMAIL as mail may not get there!
TIP: On-Line Applications

May use word recognition software to screen for words in your resume and cover letter from the job description.
Resumes

- Target your resume
- Pay attention to keywords in job description
- Be concise but more detail and length allowed than standard resume (on-line version could easily be several pages; hard copy 2-3)
- Use numbers to highlight accomplishments and quantify results
- Think about what is measurable in your experience
- Practical experience counts

Do not make them work to find your experience relevant!
Do grades matter?

Yes and No

- US Attorneys - trial skills trump grades
- SEC - grades matter
- DOJ - varies by division

As with any job, the complete candidate makes the impact with experience, leadership, interest …..
After the application

- Candidates often get screening interview
- Second interviews (sometimes team or panel)
- Know why you are interested and want to do the kind of work
- Be prepared for behavioral interviews
On-line or targeted applications

The government is mission driven. They should know why you want to work there.
Grades and Steps

- Salaries on the General Schedule (grades)
  New law graduates usually GS-9 or GS-11
- There are steps within each grade allowing for increases
- Grades rarely negotiable but steps may be (based on experience, coursework, …)
- May get an increase for locality pay

“If we offer this, will you take it?”
Ask because must write hiring memo to H.R. to determine grade and step.
Benefits

- Tend to be good
- Generally non-negotiable
- Vacation may be negotiable (example: based on a prior clerkship)
Security Clearance

- Most attorneys must pass (summer interns too but less involved)
- Investigation
- Start the process as soon as possible
- Be forthcoming
- Problems: back taxes, loan defaults, felonies, failure to register for selective service
- Drug use is a problem with some agencies (timing, type, frequency all play a role)
Other considerations:

- Duke in DC & externships may be excellent ways to connect inside an agency
- Some agencies have loan repayment
Post –graduate Legal Positions (non-attorney)

- Consider civil service jobs that do not require a law degree:
  Paralegal, Hearings and Appeals Specialist, Contract Specialist, Labor Relations Specialist, Estate Tax Examiner, Analyst


- Once in, easy to move up and around. And, to network!
Judge Advocate General (JAG Corps.)

- Immediate responsibility
- Exposure to a wide variety of legal areas
- Various branches separate:
  - Air Force
  - Army
  - Coast Guard
  - Marine
  - Navy

See Handout for additional information.
Prosecutors and Defenders Offices

- PSLawNet.org
  http://www.pslawnet.org/prosecutor-publicdefendercareers
Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF)

- Competitive program that recruits for policy and management jobs (not attorney positions). Apply in fall of 3L year and must be nominated by school.
- After application, series of tests and interviews to get to finalist stage.

https://www.pmf.opm.gov/
Jobs on the Hill

- Great resource: Yale Law School Capitol Hill Guide
  Includes list of resources for job postings and background research.
- Political Positions (personal offices, committee work, party work)
  NETWORK!!
- Non-political positions (legislative counsel, Senate or House Counsel, Library of Congress)
Judicial Branch Jobs

- Clerkships and summer internships are most common for graduates and law students.
- For more information, please see the extensive resources on the Career Center website and attend programs.
- Meet with Robert Barton in Career Center.
Lessons learned from Alumni:

- Government Honors Programs (summer or clerkship really help)
- How to contact alums (through us or on your own)
- Tips for contacting alumni
- How can alumni help? You may have someone who can tell you about openings and/or speak for you inside.
- Consider non-attorney positions
- Easy to move up, and around, when in