● There are a few upperclass courses that virtually every student should take. These are Business Associations, Basic Federal Income Tax, and Evidence. These are not only building block courses, they are also subjects with which virtually every lawyer should have some familiarity.

● Vary your course work each semester. It is not necessary—and is not desirable—to take all of the main building block courses in the fall semester of the second year (or indeed, in the second year). For example, if you don’t intend to take any tax courses other than the introductory course (BFIT), you can defer that to your third year. Consider taking some at least one smaller or more specialized course each term. Mix in some courses that will broaden your perspectives or develop different skills each semester.

● Take a VERY LIGHT LOAD in the fall semester of the second year. Recruiting is far more time consuming and emotionally absorbing than most students can imagine. Consider taking a minimal load at or close to 12 credits, and balanced by a heavier load in later semesters.

● Other general principles of course selection.

Most students should take either administrative law or a course involving one of the specific administrative regimes, such as environmental law and labor law. Administrative practice is enormously important in the current legal environment, and students should have some exposure to it.

Consider the skills that particular courses develop. Some courses involve statutory interpretation and the interpretation of administrative regulations. Some courses involve writing. In addition to seminars, a number of other courses require the preparation of a brief (appellate practice) or a paper. In trial practice, appellate practice, and some other courses students make oral presentations. Other courses involve litigation skills (trial practice), or negotiation and mediation skills. Consider not only the substantive matter of the courses you select, but also the skills you will develop and refine.

Make an effort to select courses and to pursue your course work in a way that will permit you to develop relationships with one or more members of the faculty who know you and your work, and will be able to serve as mentors, advising you and serving as a recommendation. In general, this means that you should not necessarily take all of the general building block courses in the fall—and certainly not all in the fall of your second year. You can get to know faculty by:

● enrolling in smaller more specialized courses (including but not limited to seminars)
● doing an independent study for a professor
● serving as a research or teaching assistant
● being an unusually active participant in class discussions and spending some time with the professor outside of class asking questions and discussing issues pertaining to the course and related areas.

Faculty references are extremely important in the judicial clerkship selection process, and can very helpful in many other ways too. They are most helpful if you can build these relationships early—particularly in the fall of your second year.
• **Preparation for the bar examination should not be a major factor in course selection, particularly in the second year.** Of course most of you will need to pass the bar examination, but taking a law school course (especially one 18 months in advance) is not the best way to prepare for the bar exam. Almost all law graduates take a specialized bar review course a few months before the bar exam, and that is generally sufficient to introduce you to the subjects tested. So it is not a good use of your scarce time in law school to take courses in which you have little or not interest, merely to prepare for the bar examination.

• **Consider taking not only courses that are directly relevant to the type of legal work you expect to do, but also courses that will give you a broader perspective on the law.** You are studying at a research university, not a trade school. You should take advantage of the opportunities offered here to stretch your horizons. This can not only enrich you as a person, but also ultimately make you a better lawyer.