

## **Talking Points for 1L, 2L and 3L Year**

Breaking the ice can be hard. Here is a list of topics likely to be on your mentee's mind, and some suggestions about how to engage these issues.

### **1L Year**

During the 1L year we seek to ease students' transition into the legal profession by providing them basic information about the legal profession, law practice, legal education, and preparing for a job search.

#### **Welcome to the Profession**

- Discuss what law practice is and the purposes of the legal profession;
- Discuss the role of lawyers and the judiciary in our society;
- Discuss how to keep balance in one's life during law school;
- Discuss the importance of mental health and resources available (Lawyer Assistance Programs, CAPS);
- Discuss the pitfalls of substance abuse;
- Discuss the Student's preparation in law school, including the use of study aids and study groups;
- Stress the importance of seeking help early and often if experiencing difficulties academically, in personal life, or with health and wellbeing.

#### **Research and Writing**

- Discuss the purposes of memoranda, pleadings, motions, orders, and opinion letters;
- Discuss relevant issues surrounding legal writing, such as techniques for the most effective legal writing – how to avoid common mistakes causing pleadings to be rejected, how to effectively use sample legal pleadings and forms – and techniques for efficient research, etc.

#### **Career Overview**

- Discuss, to the extent knowledgeable, differences between large firm, small firm, government, public interest, business, in- house and nonprofit practice, non-traditional legal positions, and alternatives to practicing law;
- Discuss the student's long-term career goals and ways to achieve those goals;
- Discuss different career paths and identify resources for exploring options;
- Discuss course selection and how that relates to job preparedness;
- Discuss the importance of soft skills (interpersonal, common sense, communication);
- Discuss how finding a job after graduation starts now!

#### **Ethics**

- Discuss broadly the ethics rules attorneys must comply follow;
- Discuss recurring ethical issues the Mentor encounters in practice;

- Discuss a real life ethics situation in which the Mentor has been involved.

#### **Introduction to the Legal Community**

- Discuss the American Bar Association, Illinois Student Bar Association, and any other relevant groups;
- Discuss Continuing Legal Education requirements and ways to satisfy those requirements;
- Discuss extra-curricular activities and group memberships that are relevant to understanding the legal community;
- Discuss the importance of diversity and inclusion and their value in the legal community;
- Discuss major private and public legal entities, including large firms, the judiciary, and large government offices with in-house counsel.

#### **Professionalism**

- Discuss the role of professionalism in an attorney's career;
- Discuss the consequences of a lack of professionalism;
- Discuss the "unwritten" customary rules of civility and etiquette among lawyers and judges in the community;
- Discuss establishing a reputation and how reputation can impact an attorney's practice.

#### **Financial Responsibility:**

- Discuss the importance of understanding student loans, their interest and repayment rates, etc.;
- Discuss the importance of keeping debt low;
- Provide references to resources covering the management of student loan debt ([accessgroup.org](http://accessgroup.org)).

#### **2L Year**

The 2L we seek to educate students about interacting with clients and other attorneys and to focus on a more specific career path.

#### **Networking**

- Discuss the importance of networking to one's legal career;
- Discuss specific examples of how the Mentor's networking has helped his or her career;
- Discuss the pitfalls and benefits of social networking;
- Evaluate the student's social networking;
- Discuss how the resources of the Career Development Office can be helpful.
- Interacting with Partners and Senior Associates

- Discuss how new associates and interns should act to maximize their chances of succeeding during their first year at a job;
- Discuss ways new associates and interns can develop a friendly, yet professional, relationship with supervisors.

### **Career Paths**

- Discuss what the student's career goals were before law school, during his or her first year, and currently, identifying how and why the goals have changed in the wake of grades and changing interests;
- Discuss resources available to the Student to pursue his or her current goals;
- Discuss reconciling job expectations with actual experience and maximizing career satisfaction.

### **Ethics**

- Discuss common malpractice and grievance traps and ways to avoid them;
- Discuss the role of the Illinois State Bar Association, the grievance and investigation process, and malpractice insurance;
- Discuss potential resources for dealing with complicated ethical issues, including conflicts of interests;
- Discuss practices to maintain client confidentiality.

### **Case Evaluation**

- Discuss the Mentor's process for evaluating and engaging clients;
- Discuss the best ways to evaluate a potential case and how to decide whether to accept a proffered representation;
- Discuss specific examples of times when the Mentor misevaluated a case and what the Mentor learned from this experience.

### **Practical Aspects of Working in a Law Environment**

- Discuss roles and responsibilities of paralegals, secretaries and other office personnel and how to establish good working relationships with others in the same office who are support staff, colleagues, or senior attorneys;
- Discuss office politics and common pitfalls to avoid while working in an office;
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a solo practice, public interest practice, business, and the role of in-house counsel;
- Revisit the importance of mental health, wellness, and the pitfalls of substance abuse and how they affect the workplace environment.

### **3L Year**

In the 3L year we try to bridge the final gap between law school and the legal profession. Discussions focus on job searching and transitioning into practice.

**Job Searching & Managing Law School Debt**

- Discuss job-search strategies, distinguishing the effective and less effective;
- Discuss practical ways to manage law school debt.

**Client Development**

- Discuss how client development is the lifeblood of law practice and how it affects an attorney's prospects for promotion;
- Discuss methods of client development that have been successful for the Mentor and discuss other techniques for business development, including any relevant ethical concerns and best professional practices.

**Client Communication**

- Discuss the importance of client communication and how to maintain good ongoing communication, including the use of retention and fee agreements, keeping clients informed about matters, confirming things in writing, being on time, etc.;
- Discuss proper legal counseling techniques, and duties and responsibilities of advising clients;
- Discuss techniques for dealing with an unreasonable, dishonest, or otherwise difficult client;
- Discuss the responsibilities of the client and the lawyer in decision-making and the best ways to involve a client in his or her case.

**Life Balance Issues & Time Management**

- Discuss techniques for finding a balance between career and personal life;
- Discuss the Mentor's non-legal formal and informal extracurricular activities and how they are unique from law practice;
- Discuss good stress management techniques, as well as the temptation to abuse substances to manage stress;
- Discuss good time management skills and techniques.

**Welcome to Law Practice**

- Discuss the Student's short-term and long-term goals moving into law practice;
- Discuss how the Mentor-Student relationship transitions from law school to practice.