

CONNECTING TO THE BERKELEY LAW ALUMNI NETWORK

Prepared by Eric J. Stern, Berkeley Law Career Development Office (May 2011)

The Berkeley Law alumni network is one of the most powerful resources you have at your disposal both as a student and a future graduate of this law school. Talking to alums throughout law school will help you to explore a variety of career paths, receive invaluable advice on course selection, clinics, and internships and help you to build the kind of professional network you will need to achieve your professional goals after law school and throughout your career. And, as you approach graduation or even later when you are looking to make a career transition, regular contact with our alumni network can help to reveal job leads that have not been (and perhaps never will be) publicly posted. Some studies have shown that as many as 70% of all positions are filled through networking and referrals.

This short guide and the resources listed below are designed to help you identify alums who are working in areas and with legal employers that are of interest to you. It will also provide you with guidance on how to go about doing effective outreach to the Berkeley Law alumni network. If you have any questions on how to use these resources or about your particular approach to networking with alums, please [feel free to contact a CDO Attorney-Counselor for assistance](#).

SETTING GOALS

It is important before you begin your alumni outreach efforts to set goals and expectations. Remember, your immediate goal is not to land a job interview with the alum's employer. Instead, you should focus on targeting alums who are doing the kind of work you are potentially interested in doing after graduation or later in your career. They can give you a sense of their day-to-day work, the path they took to obtain their current job, advice on the skills and experiences you will need to compete for positions in their field and perhaps some additional contacts in their field that they think you should talk with next.

You might be asking yourself why alums would take time out of their busy days to talk to strangers. What do they have to gain by doing so? First, nearly all lawyers have benefitted from the generosity of other lawyers when it comes to career advice, contacts and support and are willing and often enjoy repaying the favor. In fact, many people enjoy being called upon to offer advice and assistance (the way you might if a bright undergrad asked about your law school experience). Second, many alums enjoy supporting students as a way of giving back to Berkeley Law, based on the connection and fondness they feel for their law school experience. And, finally, savvy alums realize that if they support you now they will be able to call on you for help a few years down the road when you are a successful lawyer in practice.

Lawyers are very busy people. This means that it may take a while to get a response and that some of the lawyers you reach out to will not respond at all. Don't take this personally. You will have to reach out to a number of lawyers in order to create the possibility for a strong professional connection – one that could potentially lead to mentorship and/or the opportunity to be considered for your dream job in the future.

REACHING OUT TO ALUMS

You may find it useful to start by making a list of all of your existing connections. This could consist of relatives, friends (maybe some of whom are now lawyers), former co-workers and supervisors, college professors, lawyers you met at law school events and more. Then, you want to think about making a list of outreach targets that you don't know. For example, if you are interested in exploring a career as a public defender, it will be invaluable for you to talk to as many public defender alums as you possibly can. The resources below are designed to help you get started in building that contact list; and CDO Attorney-Counselors stand by to assist you with the development of your outreach strategy both during and after law school.

The best way to request a phone or in-person meeting is with a short but targeted email (see below for a sample outreach email). Since lawyers are busy professionals, you may want to initially request a 10-minute phone meeting or a short in-person meeting either at the lawyer's office or at a nearby café. Make this meeting as convenient as is possible for the lawyer to attend. You do not initially need to send a resume unless your contact requested it. Once you have set up a meeting, you might consider sending a resume via email for background and context to inform the conversation. If you are reaching out to an attorney to whom you were referred by a contact of yours, be sure to mention the name of your common contact as a reference point as well. This will increase the chance of a response and protect the relationship you have with the primary attorney who put you in touch with attorneys in her network.

MEETING WITH ALUMS

We have prepared a list of sample questions in our [Guide to Informational Interviewing](#) that you can utilize in preparation for your phone or in-person outreach meeting. This same guide also contains some great advice on how to prepare for your outreach meetings.

Towards the end of the meeting, you should ask the attorney if she might suggest other attorneys she thinks could be helpful to you in your career exploration (as well as relevant professional groups). If the attorney is willing, ask if it would be alright for you to use her name as an introduction when you are reaching out to her contacts. Then, promptly follow-up on these contacts. Within 24 hours of your meeting, follow-up with a thank you email note. This should not be the end of your communication with the attorney – you should be sure to update the attorney specifically on how your conversations went with people in her network and generally on your career exploration and job search throughout law school and/or after if appropriate. (See below for a sample thank you email note.)

Networking is not easy, but it is a necessary and invaluable part of your career development both as a law student and throughout your career as a lawyer. And - again - you are not alone in this process. Our office stands by ready to help you get started and develop a strategy that will achieve results.

SAMPLE OUTREACH EMAIL

NOTE: Please be sure not to simply copy the sample below – your email should be as targeted as is possible to the goals of *your* alumni outreach and career exploration.

Dear Ms. Smith:

Eric Stern in the Career Development Office recommended that I get in touch with you. I am currently a second-year student at Berkeley Law and am particularly interested in learning more about your work at the U.S. Department of Justice, Environment and Natural Resources Division (“ENRD”). My focus at Berkeley Law has been on environmental law, where I am a member of the *Ecology Law Quarterly* and a candidate for the Environmental Law Certificate.

Last summer, I worked as a legal intern in the California Energy Commission, an experience that solidified both my commitment to environmental law and government service.

I realize that you have a very busy schedule. However, I was wondering if you might have ten minutes to spare for a phone meeting. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your work at ENRD and to ask for your advice on how I can position myself for a long and successful career in public service.

Outside of class, my schedule is relatively flexible and I would be happy to work around your busy schedule to set up a time to talk.

Thanks in advance for your consideration and I hope to talk with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

SAMPLE THANK YOU EMAIL

NOTE: Please be sure not to simply copy the sample below – your note should be as personal as is possible, reflecting something specific that you discussed during the course of your meeting.

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to talk with me. I really appreciated your advice on the steps I can take to best position myself for a career in public service. At your suggestion, I emailed Jimmy Jones at the EPA to request a phone meeting. I will be sure to let you know how that goes and to keep you posted on my career as it develops.

Thanks again and I look forward to staying in touch.

All my best,

Jane Doe

KEY RESOURCES

[California Bar Association](#): If you know the name of an alum to whom you would like reach out, you can use this searchable database to access their bar association profile. Attorney profiles may include the name of the alum's current employer, as well as a current email address and/or phone number.

[California Bar Supplementary Search and Statistics](#): This site will allow you to search the bar association's membership database by law school, undergraduate school, city, county, name of employer and section of interest.

[Martindale.com](#): This website allows you to search Martindale's directory of lawyers and law firms by name, law school, firm, practice area, city, state and other variables. This directory is probably most useful for those who are searching for alums at private firms (of all sizes). Click [here](#) for a set of instructions on how to perform targeted searches for alums working in small and mid-sized firms, and [here](#) for other helpful resources.

[Leadership Library](#): In partnership with the law library, the CDO is thrilled to be able to offer access to the on-line version of one of the most powerful and comprehensive professional directories. The database allows you to search by name and organization and spans all sectors and nations. Many students have used this resource to find, for example, contacts within government agencies, judicial chambers, in-house legal departments and congressional committees. Click [here](#) for a short guide prepared for Berkeley Law by the staff of Leadership Directories.

[Linked In](#): This professional networking site is a good vehicle for networking with legal professionals –whether Berkeley Law alums or other professionals with whom you may have another common connection. If you should need any assistance in setting up your Linked In profile, please see Eric Stern in the CDO.

- [Berkeley Law Mentor Directory](#) In partnership with the Alumni Center, we launched a new Linked In Mentor Group. This new group is designed to become a primary source for Berkeley Law students seeking to benefit from alumni assistance with regard to career-related advice. The alums that have joined this group did so with the understanding that they will not be contacted by students for employment or business purposes, but rather for students to obtain informational interviews, ask advice on choosing a practice area, and seek information on legal trends in diverse geographic locations. Students are advised not to contact mentors for employment or business purposes. Click [here](#) to join. Feel free to talk to a CDO Attorney-Counselor if you have any questions about the best way to approach alums through this group.