



CDO: Reaching Out To Employers Outside of WIP

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Some of you who plan on participating in our Winter Interview Program (WIP) have asked whether you should be reaching out to firms in advance of WIP.

I. The Short Answer

If you plan on bidding on California firms in WIP, you should not apply to them before WIP. In fact, our [recruiting policies](#) (like those of many of our peer institutions) restrict WIP-participating employers from pre-WIP interview/screening activities. Our reasons are in Section II below.

Some of you, however, may want to reach out to a *few* alums or others in your professional networks to learn more about a practice area or firm in which you may be particularly interested. These informational interviews should be a selective effort and you need to exercise caution if you choose to do it. While they may be helpful in preparing for WIP, they are by no means necessary to succeed in the process. Learn more about selective outreach in Section III below.

As you consider whether and/or how to conduct selective outreach, keep in mind that the CDO will be hosting a series of “Meet the Employer” networking events later this month. They will provide you with an opportunity to meet virtually with attorneys at firms you are interested in and ask questions that can help you prepare for WIP. Stay tuned for an email from our office with more information in the next few weeks.

If you plan on working outside of California for your 2L summer, then it would make sense for you to contact offices of firms in your chosen location, but only those who will not be participating in Berkeley Law’s WIP. You should not be reaching out or apply early to the ones who are participating (as explained in Section II below). We will be publishing the list of WIP participants next week and will send you an email about where to find it then.

Shortly after that, we will lay out the process for applying to non-WIP firms outside of California. As for the timing of applying to non-WIP firms outside of California, you should aim to have your materials ready to go right after the Thanksgiving holiday.

II. Reasons For Not Applying To – or Interviewing With – WIP-Participating Firms Before WIP

Last spring, large firms requested that law schools delay their interview programs until the beginning of next year. They wanted additional time to analyze their future business plans and hiring needs in light of changing economic realities. They also wanted their summer associate candidates to have an additional set of grades to make a better assessment of their academic performance.

In response, law schools agreed to delay their on campus interview programs. As a safeguard, Berkeley Law, and many of its peer schools, promulgated recruiting policies restricting firms from pre-WIP interview/screening activities (with only a few enumerated exceptions) in order to ensure a level playing field for employers as well as students, particularly those who appear less obviously credentialed or who are less well-networked as their peers. You can find Berkeley Law’s recruiting policies [here](#).

One other reason not to attempt to engage in early outreach to WIP-participating firms is that you would lose your WIP “Lottery Advantage.” WIP is 100% lottery. That means employers do not get an advance look at your grades and do not choose interviewees. While employers in WIP will ultimately see your transcript before making a final hiring decision, it can be a distinct advantage to have the opportunity to make a first impression in person rather than

allowing them to pre-judge you based on your grades. If you were to apply outside the WIP process, firms could ask for, and would consider, your grades in deciding whether to meet with you. If they decline to do so, but you later obtain an interview with them through WIP, they will have already seen your transcript and formed an initial impression of you.

III. Reasons For Selectively Reaching Out To Alums/Contacts In Advance of WIP

Some key questions that you will need to have answers for during WIP interviews are: “Why are you interested in our firm?” and “What do you want to do with your law degree?” and “What areas do you want to practice in?” Meeting with lawyers at WIP-type firms is one way of preparing – and practicing – your answers to these questions. You can meet with them not only by attending firm receptions and other networking events, but also by contacting alumni (or others you identify through your professional network) who are doing work in which you are particularly interested or who are at firms that are high value targets for you.

Requesting informational interviews can preserve your ability to make your own first impression (rather than having your grades or your other formal application materials do it for you). It is also a way of underscoring your genuine interest in particular firms. However, this is not something you would do for every firm – or even most firms – on which you intend to bid.

Consult the CDO's [Guide to Connecting To The Berkeley Law Alumni Network](#) for more information. As the Guide suggests, you do have to be thoughtful about this process. You need to be thoroughly prepared and you need to assume that the person you contact may have a say – positively or negatively – in your potential future with his employer. He may also ask for your grades, which you may not want to hand over pre-WIP. For all these reasons, we strongly recommend that you make an appointment with a CDO career-counselor to review your approach and help you prepare.

NOTE: If you are committed exclusively to PIPS opportunities and have no interest in receiving information that relates only to private law firm recruiting, you can opt off the email list we will use to send such information by simply replying to this email.

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