

Survey Results (Included Responses)

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J.D. Specialization: NALP Firms

Questions that required written responses are displayed by individual query. The "Report Overview" button or "Back" button will return you to your survey results.

Each individual respondent is referenced under the # column.

13 Please provide any additional input relative to the issue of specialization within the J.D. curriculum.

#	Response
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| 1 | Litigation and Public Interest specializations should include requirements for both clinics and internship experience in the specialized area. |
| 2 | IP candidates with technical training have an advantage over a candidate with a non-technical background who concentrates in IP classes. |
| 3 | We are most interested in graduates with knowledge of and preference for an employee benefits practice, perhaps through work experience. |
| 4 | In answer to #6, for an entry level candidate, while it would be an interesting addition, I don't believe a concentration in a particular area would have equal weight as the other factors (grades, class rank, law review)in the decision-making process for our firm at this time. |
| 5 | I believe the current system in most traditional programs, wherein students are allowed to select a number of electives, is sufficient to provide any specialization a student might want at the law school stage. It is dangerous, however, to tailor an entire law school experience to a specialization. What if the student later decides she wants to do something else, but she is now pigeon-holed into this "specialization". As has been said time and time again, law school is not so much about teaching the substantive law as to teach students to "think like lawyers". We should not get away from this by putting too much emphasis on any area of law. This would be disservice to the law student, and to the legal community. |
| 6 | Specialization is a useful credential in our hiring of 3Ls or in our hiring of IP (patent). For summer associates, we generally do not find this to be a distinguishing feature (except patent). |
| 7 | Specialization at JD level is largely unattractive and meaningless to us. We place great value on post-college, pre-law business, finance, banking, HR, environmental, or other real-world professional experiences. |
| 8 | When considering recent graduates for a position in my office, I place a great deal of emphasis on relevant clinical experience and the number of advanced level courses taken in subject areas relevant to indigent criminal defense. Strong background in evidence, criminal law, criminal procedure, as well as clinical experience in criminal defense, mark the strongest candidates. Trial advocacy can be important but I find the quality of skills development in this course varies a greatly among schools. While I value innovation, students need a firm grounding in traditional areas mentioned above. "Soft" courses in my field add little to the students' readiness to be trial lawyer. Whatever labels are used, they should be consistent and meaningful. |
| 9 | I think specialization is overrated. We give priority to graduates who are able to analyze problems, write well, be able to work with people, and have a passion for the law then have a certificate in a specialty. These are all skills in which it is hard to train someone. With these skills we can train them to be a specialist. |
| 10 | Students should be quite sure they intend to practice in their "concentration." Completing a concentration in a particular area may eliminate them from employers' consideration for positions in other practices areas. For example, if a student completes a concentration in environmental law, she/he will likely be at a disadvantage if she/he applies for a labor and employment law position or even a general associate position. The employer will likely assume that the student is only or primarily interested in an environmental law position and convincing the employer otherwise will be quite a challenge. |
| 11 | Philosophically, I tend to believe that too much specialization in law school is not a good thing. |
| 12 | We have seen little value from those that attend a Special IP curriculum and those that do not. |
| 13 | This is probably not relevant to our practice. We train new lawyers in areas of practice they will need. We want a good foundation in legal analysis and writing from a law school. If law students also have clinical experience, or volunteer opportunities in public service, that is a plus. |
| 14 | The key to question 6 is the preface, "all other factors being equal" Specialization or no, the most important criteria is overall law school performance, followed by a background showing diligence, and to a lesser extent the law school attended. Specialized curriculum will matter only at the margin. |
| 15 | Personally, except with respect to tax and international studies, I don't think that law schools should offer areas of specialty. I think that law students should study all areas and should have a general background. |
| 16 | I see specialization generally as no more than an interest in a particular area, not as an indication that the candidate has any particular expertise. Previous work experience as well as undergraduate and graduate work in a particular area such as IP is much more important in my view than a concentration in law school in the area. |

- 17 When I interview new lawyers, the most important attributes I interview look for are whether the person can think, research, write and analyze well -- and whether the person shows good judgment, would fit in with the office, and is pleasant to be around. In my experience, recent graduates from "specialized programs" do no better -- and in some instances have performed worse -- than students with a more traditional legal education. I personally regret the degree of specialization within the legal profession, and would much prefer that all students receive a balanced legal education and gain expertise once they enter the field -- or perhaps through joint degree programs in environmental science or tax, in which substantive knowledge can be gained.
- 18 I believe most large law firm would rather take a candidate who had a good academic record at a good school, than a student who had done just average at a lower ranked school, but had a "specialization." I perceive that this is a law school-driven device to get students to come. But if law firms are not looking for that speciality, that student is limited in their job search unless he or she did well on EVERY aspect of their law school career, not just the specialization.
- 19 A student, by specializing, pigeon-holes him/herself into a practice area that might not be hiring, thereby limiting his/her choices. It's a great idea in theory and in my view should be treated somewhat like a college major.
- 20 I favor any program that enables a prospective lawyer to depart from the theoretical and enter the world of the practical. In my view, law schools are generally woeful in their efforts to prepare students to practice law.
- 21 I do not view this as something legal employers care much about so would not waste a lot of time and effort on accreditation nor definition. As a practical matter, much of what you learn in law school is not useful in the practice and we all know it. Clinical experience is just as valuable as any sort of concentration.
- 22 I can see a benefit from specialization in certain legal fields (e.g., tax, intellectual property, securities, etc.). If I'm recruiting to fill such a slot, I'd be more attracted to a student with that "concentration." However, your question #12 refers to accreditation, which concerns me. I do not favor a separate accreditation in a narrow topic, if it excludes or limits too much a student's general legal education. If a student is too limited in her/his studies, she/he will not be able to change the focus of her/his practice if the market changes.
- 23 Clinical and internship experiences are much more important to us than academic specialization.
- 24 At our firm, unless we are hiring specifically for Patent or Tax, we are typically looking to hire entry-level lawyers well a well-rounded education to fit a variety of practice areas to best supply any department in need of entry-level lawyers.
- 25 I have been primarily responsible for the hiring of attorneys for more than 6 years, and I find this whole "specialization" yet another justification for students who did not get into a top-tier law school, cannot get good grades, or did not make law review, to try to get around the mandatory minimum hiring requirements that firms set up to weed out those with the least chance of succeeding as attorneys.

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