

## APPLYING DIRECTLY TO LARGE LAW FIRMS

*There are many large law firms that do not participate in recruiting programs through SULS. If you are interested in working at a large law firm, you should consider expanding your job search to such firms, whether in Boston or outside of the state or region, and contacting those firms directly. Hiring at these large law firms is very competitive and a heavy emphasis is placed on grades/class rank and honor board membership. Remember that only about 10% of law students nationally succeed in securing a large law firm job, so it is important that you pursue a diversified job search.*

*Below is some general information to get you started with such a job search, and you should also meet with a career counselor in the Career Development Office to discuss your particular interests in more depth.*

### Some Basics

- **Timing:** Most large firms start interviewing on law school campuses in early August. Because hiring decisions are made on a rolling basis, we recommend that you contact firms directly beginning in late July. You should not wait to see whether you get a job through the SULS fall recruitment process first. Rather, perform job searches with a wide range of employers in several geographic locations, if possible, simultaneously — but be realistic about the time required to identify and apply thoughtfully to these employers, and your genuine interest in them and their geographic location.
- **Types of initial interviews:** Employers often opt to screen students through an initial interview in their office. If you reside in, or can travel to, a city where you hope to work in the future, contact these firms and request an interview when you are in town. Alternatively, some employers may request a telephone interview before deciding to pursue your candidacy further. Telephone interviews can offer challenges since you do not have the advantage of in-person interaction. If you have questions about how to prepare for such an interview, speak with a CDO career counselor.
- **Cost:** Remember, the first trip to a firm's office is "on your dime." While a firm will typically cover the cost of visiting them for a callback (or full-round) interview, you will be responsible for travel and accommodation costs for an initial interview in another city/region. For callback interviews, you will be required to complete a reimbursement form such as the NALP Travel Expense Reimbursement Form available at [www.nalp.org](http://www.nalp.org).
- **Schedule:** Recruiting outside of the Boston area requires a great deal of time and travel. It is imperative that you have a good handle on your classroom, interview, law journal, and other commitments as you pursue this job search. If possible, consider trying to schedule initial interviews in other locations before the start of classes or grouped together on the same trip.

## **Research Firms**

Compile a list of law firms in a particular geographic area that meet your qualifications as to firm size, practice areas, and summer associate program structure. Apply directly to those firms that do not recruit at SULS, either on-campus, at an off-campus job fair or through a resume collection. While researching the firms, note the names of SULS alumni working there.

Helpful websites include: <https://law-suffolk-csm.symplicity.com/students>  
(See the 'Symplicity Employer Searches' handout on the CDO website)  
[www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com)  
[www.nalpdirectory.com](http://www.nalpdirectory.com)

Of course, also review the firm's website for additional information.

## **Use Contacts and Network**

Although hiring at large firms is highly structured and hiring decisions are made by a select hiring committee, having a personal contact within a firm may prove helpful. Consider contacting SULS alumni (or undergraduate alumni, family friends, or other connections) at firms and having a 15-minute chat with them about the firm and how they found their jobs. Initiate contact through an email and follow-up a few days later by phone.

Your questions might include:

- What makes a successful summer associate at your firm?*
- What do you find most rewarding about working at the firm?*
- Did the firm recruit you through a SULS recruiting program, or did you contact the firm directly?*
- May I keep in touch with you for advice as my job search continues?*

Speaking with someone at a firm also provides you with the opportunity to mention your interest in the firm, that you will be applying directly for their summer associate program, and to confirm that you have the correct contact information for the recruitment coordinator and/or hiring partner. When you send your resume and cover letter to the recruiting coordinator, you should also "cc" the contact you have established at the firm. If your contact is favorably impressed with you, he or she might put in a good word for you. Be sure to keep in touch and send a thank you note to any helpful contacts.

## **Write Compelling Cover Letters**

It is important to have a well-written cover letter to include with your resume. Law firm employers read cover letters carefully and use them as a screening tool. It is best to keep your cover letter relatively short. Do not restate the details enumerated on your resume. Instead, focus on your interest in that particular firm (and discuss your ties to the geographic area and interest in its practice areas) and on why the firm should be interested in you (highlighting your relevant work experience or coursework). Point out your academic achievements. Also, as stated earlier, note that you can be (or will be) in town on a particular timeframe and available to interview at that time. If appropriate, mention your contact's name in the cover letter. Call the recruiting coordinator about two weeks after you send your mailing to follow-up on your application and restate your interest.