
OCI: On-Campus Interview Program & Callback Interviews

The On Campus Interview (OCI) program is a phenomenon that occurs at most law schools across the country during the months of August, September and October. Legal employers visit law school campuses to conduct interviews for summer and entry-level associates. These are mostly larger law firms who can predict their summer hiring needs six to nine months ahead of time and who have the resources to conduct interviews at law schools around the area and across the country. Some smaller firms, government agencies and public interest employers do participate in OCI.

You should check the list of OCI employers carefully before making your decision about whether to participate. OCI is clearly not for everyone! With so many employers looking for you, it's an extremely passive way to get a job. Typically 25%-30% of all law students get their summer or post-graduation job through OCI. On the other hand, it can be a very visible, high profile, exciting way to find out about the legal marketplace and to learn about yourself in the process. It's also an exercise in following directions—not only deadlines imposed by LCS, but those criteria set forth by each individual employer. We cannot emphasize the importance of paying attention to detail as you go through the OCI process, as well as the importance of researching employers carefully before you submit materials to them. There is no “magic” ratio of submissions to interviews, so don't feel the need to submit materials to as many as you can just to hedge your bets! You're much better off targeting selected employers based on your perceived match between your skills and experience and their available opportunities.

Santa Clara University School of Law uses SCU Law Jobs, powered by Symplicity, to manage all aspects of our Fall on-campus interviewing program and job postings. Using the OCI feature within Symplicity, you can research employers, submit materials and schedule awarded interviews entirely online.

Getting Ready for OCI

It's extremely important to start researching employers early. Sometime over the summer, we will finalize the list of participating employers and make this information available on Symplicity. Then once school starts in the fall, you'll have a very short window in which to select those employers to whom you'd like to submit materials. Immediately following the bidding deadline, LCS forwards your resumes and cover letters to each employer who then selects their own interviewees. You'll be notified by e-mail if you have been selected; you then need to log on and schedule your interview time.

Once you have been selected for an interview, you need to begin your preparation. Research the employer in depth—their areas of practice, number of attorneys, locations, diversity and representative clients. Good sources of information include the employer's own web site, employer information on the Symplicity web site, the NALP Directory of Legal Employers, student evaluations in a binder in the LCS resource library, *The Insider's Guide to Law Firms*, Martindale-Hubbell directories, West Legal Directory and recent news articles or cases in which the employer is mentioned. Law Career Services has a variety of these resources. Be sure to talk to faculty, staff, alumni, current students, family members and friends to see what information they might be able to provide about a particular employer.

What Can You Expect During OCI?

All interviews are held in The Career Center in Benson to the right of the fountain. An LCS staff member will always be at The Career Center to coordinate the program and act as a liaison between you and the employers. Here is a short list of tips and strategies to make the most of your OCI interviewing experience:

- ✓ Arrive 10-15 minutes early
- ✓ We can let you know if the interviewer is running early or late or whether it's a different person than we originally thought
- ✓ The Career Center has several student computers for you to conduct last-minute research
- ✓ If you're running late, please call Law Career Services at 408-554-4350 and let us know
- ✓ Dress conservatively even though they may be casual
- ✓ You can expect your interview to last about 25-30 minutes
- ✓ Get a business card or write down the name of the interviewer in case you want to follow-up with them.
- ✓ We do not conduct interviews on religious holidays or during the law school's Fall Break

On-campus interviews are extremely short screening interviews, and most employers are hoping to make their decisions under a tight timeline. Therefore it is usually not necessary—nor will you probably have the time—to write an individual thank you note for each OCI interview. If you choose to contact your interviewer(s) after an OCI interview, you should do so promptly and professionally. A handwritten or typed note is preferred, although email may also be acceptable depending on the employer and the interviewer(s).

Callback Interviews

Once you have finished your OCI interview, you will hear directly from the employer as to your status. Law Career Services will not know if you've been invited to the next round, or whether a particular employer has made their decisions. If you are invited to a second round of interviews, those typically take place at their offices. Since you are being “called back” to their office, this second interview is often referred to as a “callback.”

These interviews are usually scheduled by the half-day, either morning or afternoon. You may visit with five or six different attorneys, structured into several 20-30 minute interviews with one or two attorneys at a time. The interview may conclude with either lunch or dinner, possibly with yet another attorney or two. Keep in mind that the interview continues over lunch, dinner or drinks, and act accordingly.

Callback interviews not only offer a chance for the employer to get to know you better, but they also offer you a tremendous opportunity to see if you like what this employer has to offer! Keep in mind that a callback interview is definitely a two-way street.

Scheduling the Callback

Weigh carefully the number of callback interviews you want to accept. Be careful not to accept more than you can fit into your schedule. Remember, right now you have other commitments in your life as well; if you overextend yourself the quality of your interviews may suffer. Accept callback interviews only with those employers for whom you would want to work. Time is limited, so you want to be fair with the employer, as well as with other interviewing students.

Respond to the employer as promptly as possible when scheduling, so that all the arrangements can be made as cost-effectively and conveniently as possible. In general, employers reimburse you for expenses you incur for a callback interview, such as transportation, hotel accommodations and meals. But guidelines and limits vary among employers so be sure to ask for their reimbursement forms or policies before the

interview, if they are not included with your interview materials. Keep your receipts to include with your reimbursement request.

Be sure to let the employer know about any other interviews you might be arranging in the area; they can help schedule you appropriately. It's also appropriate to mention when you schedule the interview that you would like to meet with particular people or attorneys from certain practice areas.

Interviewing at the Employer's Office

Prior to your office visit, it's a good idea to contact the recruiter a day or two before your interview to find out who will be interviewing you. You should prepare items to bring with you to the interview, such as a few extra copies of your resume, your transcript, a list of references, and a writing sample.

At the employer's office, you have a unique opportunity to observe the environment of the interviewer. Note the firm culture and the interaction between attorneys, and between attorneys and support staff. For example, are most of the attorneys' doors open or closed; do the associates seem to enjoy their work? Also, listen to the activities at the reception desk while you are waiting for your interview. These observations, and others, may give you some insight into what working for a particular employer might be like. Be respectful to everyone you meet, from the receptionist to hiring partners.

Lunch, dinner or cocktails are sometimes included as part of a callback interview. Remember that this is a continuation of the interview, not solely a social event. Follow the interviewing attorney's lead as to what to eat, such as whether to order an appetizer, which fork to use and when to start eating. Order a mid-priced entrée that is generally easy to eat—not pasta or fish with bones! Try not to drink alcohol at all, or at least limit yourself to one glass of wine regardless of how much everyone else drinks.

After the callback interview, be sure to write a thank you note. You may write to the individual who coordinated your visit and ask that person to extend your thanks to each of the people you met with during your visit. Or if you have time and are so inclined—and have the names and titles of each of the people you met with—you can write individual thank you letters to each person. In your correspondence you can also reiterate your interests and strengths that match the employer needs. In order to do this effectively, you should keep careful records of your job search: whom you met with, particular discussion points and your perceptions.

Understanding Timing of Offers and Decisions

Callback interviews are expensive to employers, both in costs incurred in getting you to their office, and in attorney time dedicated to the interview. Therefore, in general, if you are asked for a callback interview, you are qualified to receive an offer.

So how good are your chances for an offer after receiving a callback interview? Unfortunately, there is no hard and fast "rule" on this; it depends on the employer's policy, number of positions, quality of the interview, and whether the interview is for a clerkship or associate position. Also, some employers make a first round of offers, see how many students accept, and then, if necessary, make a second round of offers to fill their program.

When employers extend offers varies greatly. Employers usually extend offers within two weeks, but some wait until they have interviewed all candidates before making a decision. Some others make an immediate offer during the interview. If you are unsure about an employer's time frame, it is appropriate to ask the employer when you can expect to hear back from them. LCS endorses the General Standards for the Timing of Offers and Decisions of the National Association for Law Placement. For additional information, please ask to see a copy of the Standards in the LCS resource library or refer to the NALP web site at www.nalp.org.