

## EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS

There are a variety of specializations within the legal arena — employment lawyer in a large law firm, city solicitor, county prosecutor, corporate counsel, law school professor, family lawyer in a small firm, federal civil rights attorney, insurance defense attorney in a mid-sized firm — just to name a few.

The skills necessary to be an effective litigator are quite different from those required to be a competent tax attorney. Enrolling in law school was the first choice in what will be a series of choices you will make as you progress through your legal career. As a student, now is the time to consider and explore your career options.

The first step in finding satisfying and meaningful employment within the legal profession is a careful assessment of your skills, interests, and personal preferences. Too often, law students do not perform the introspection that is critical to making satisfying career choices. Above all else, you have to know yourself. Consider your strengths, then think about those positions for which your strengths are well-suited.

In addition to your strengths, think about those areas of practice that most interest you. You may be able to determine a number of possible options based on intuition. Trust your instincts.

We recommend that you also consider several factors:

**Your values and lifestyle preferences:** How important are financial rewards? What about your commitment to public service? How many hours are you willing to work in a week? Are there organizations in which you wish to be active? Do you prefer working in the city or in a smaller town? Do you have geographical preferences or restrictions? Do you like to work alone or with a team? Do you want to direct or be directed?

**Organization size and type:** government (federal, state and local), law firm (large, mid-sized or small), insurance company, bank, public interest, military.

**Prestige:** How important is the type of job and the public perception of it?

### *How to Narrow the Field*

In addition to taking inventory of your skills and lifestyle preferences, finding meaningful employment within the legal profession also requires significant research. During law school, you should conduct the research necessary to make prudent career choices. Investigate opportunities to determine if they are a "good fit." The Career Resource Library in the Career Development Office has a number of excellent resources. Reading about opportunities in specific areas of the law is an effective research method; based upon your readings, you may easily eliminate positions which do not appeal to you and concentrate only on those that do.

Complement your reading by conducting informational interviews with Suffolk alumni to learn what skills are most relevant to the job, what kind of experience is most valued by employers in the field and what the job market is like for summer or entry level positions. The Alumni Career Network is a valuable resource for identifying Suffolk Law graduates who are happy to speak with students who are interested in their specialty area or type of employer. In addition to informational interviewing with Suffolk alumni, speak with your professors; many Suffolk adjunct faculty members still practice and can provide you with helpful insights.

Working in legal settings that interest you while you are in school is perhaps the best possible method of career exploration. There are a variety of ways to do this; day and evening students alike have juggled their schedules over the years to enable involvement in paid legal positions, unpaid internships (see our job postings), Suffolk clinical programs and research assistant positions in an effort to narrow choices, hone relevant skills and be better positioned for permanent employment.

Occasionally, you might find that your instincts were incorrect; the job or internship may not live up to your expectations. Do not despair; learning that a job is not a "good fit" is as important as learning that something is appropriate for you.

To further explore your interest in a specific practice area, try to get involved in extracurricular activities that will enable you to sharpen your skills, get to know fellow classmates who share your interests and demonstrate to prospective employers your commitment to a specific field. Hiring partners and those responsible for hiring decisions at state and federal agencies frequently cite a strong sense of focus and self-awareness as the most important factors in selecting candidates for positions.

Make an effort to attend any career-related programming offered by the Career Development Office or sponsored by any student groups. Listening to the insights of those who work in an area of interest can be most enlightening.