Writing Sample Guidelines

The Office of Career Services receives many questions throughout the year about writing samples. Here are some tips to help answer questions you may have had about writing samples.

1. Legal Reasoning is Key—Make sure your writing sample highlights your legal reasoning and analytical skills. A memo or brief from your legal writing or advocacy class or for a legal employer are your best options. We strongly advise that you NOT use an opinion you drafted for a judge, unless the judge gives you permission and you communicate that permission as part of your application. When describing on a resume the work you performed for a judge - you may not say that you “authored” or “wrote” opinions for a judge. Employers look on such claims skeptically. The judge’s name is on the opinion, not yours. Therefore, the judge wrote the opinion.

2. Length & Cover Sheet—Follow any guidelines the employer provides for length (do not exceed the page limit). But if no guidelines are provided, six to twelve pages are appropriate. Ideally, you would provide an entire memo or brief. However, if you provide a portion of a writing sample, always provide the analysis section AND include a cover sheet with your name, address, and a short description of the issues as follows:

Susan Student
222 N. Columbus Drive #5002
Chicago, IL 60601
student@gmail.com

Writing Sample #1
Memorandum in Support of Denying Motion for Summary Judgment in a Medical Malpractice Case
Summer Law Clerk Position
Condon & Cook Law Firm
June 2, 2008

I wrote the attached memorandum while I worked for Condon & Cook, a Chicago law firm. The issue addressed in the portion of the memo I have submitted involves…I conducted the legal research and wrote the memorandum myself. The law firm has authorized my use of this memorandum as one of my writing samples.

3. Confidentiality—If you use a sample from an employer or externship, always ask permission before using the sample and redact any confidential information, such as party names.

4. Unedited—Employers often request an unedited sample. It is fine to provide a version of your writing that has been revised as a result of feedback from your professors or others, as long as you are the one who made the revisions. Also, you should submit a clean copy (not a draft with comments on it).

5. Recent—Ideally, your sample should be less than two years old as your writing skills have likely improved with experience.

6. Provide your own work—If possible, use a sample that was not co-authored. It you worked collaboratively on the sample with a practitioner, the editorial staff of a journal, or a moot court teammate, you need to clearly indicate which portions of the sample are yours.

7. Include your name on your writing sample—You should make sure your sample has page numbers and that your name appears clearly on the sample.

8. Proofread, Proofread, Proofread—Even if you have reviewed the sample many times, give it another review by reading it backwards, out loud, or with a ruler. It should be free of misspellings, typos, grammatical errors, and all citations should be in accordance with the Bluebook and Shepardized.

9. Have your writing sample ready when requested. Some employers request a writing sample along with your resume and cover letter. Other employers will request a writing sample at an interview. If you haven’t submitted a writing sample beforehand, bring a sample with you to your interview in case you are asked for it.

10. Be ready to discuss the content of your writing sample during an interview.

What Not to Wear Fashion Show:
How to Dress for Success in Chicago’s Legal Industry

April 7th @ 5:00 p.m.
Chicago Bar Association | 321 S. Plymouth Court, 2nd Floor
Complimentary Event | Appetizers and Beer/Wine/Soda Provided
RSVP to yls@chicagobar.org | Space is limited to 100 persons

Have you ever felt unsure about your interview, court or office attire? The rules have changed as to what is considered casual, business casual and professional dress. Attend this fun, casual event to get the inside scoop on what not to wear (and what to wear) to the office, court and job interviews.
CBA Government Service Career Fair

If you are considering a career working for the government, attend the Young Lawyer’s Section’s Annual Government Service Career Fair. The fair will begin with a panel discussion on legal careers in public service followed by an opportunity to meet representatives from local government offices. Resumes will be accepted on the discretion of the agencies.

Participating organizations as of 03/22/10:
- Chicago Park District
- Circuit Court of Cook County
- Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Illinois ARDC
- Illinois Board of Education
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Internal Revenue Service
- National Labor Relations Board
- Office of the Illinois Attorney General
- Office of the Inspector General, DCFS
- Office of the State Appellate Defender
- United States Department of Energy
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
- U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission

$15 for CBA Members | $30 for Non-Members
To register, call 312-554-2056 or register on the CBA’s website: www.chicagobar.org.

Important Info for Fall 2010 On-Campus Interviewing

- Interviews begin August 16, 2010—THE WEEK BEFORE CLASSES BEGIN!
- Students graduating in 2011 & 2012 are eligible to participate
- Things to do in April & May:
  - Read all OCI instructions before your summer break. Make sure to read the powerpoint presentation and the FAQ about the Fall OCI program on our website: http://www.luc.edu/law/career/students/oci_students.html
  - If you have questions, plan to attend one of the following OCI question/answer sessions in the career services office: April 20th @ 12:00 p.m., April 21st @ 5:00 p.m., April 22nd @ 6:00 p.m.
  - Realize that all of your preparation for the program will be conducted DURING THE SUMMER!
- Things to do between April—August:
  - Read your emails from law-oci@luc.edu which will have important information and updates including DEADLINE information.
  - Update your resume.
  - If you receive any OCI interviews, schedule a mock interview with your career counselor.

For more information on Fall On-Campus Interviewing, visit: http://www.luc.edu/law/career/students/oci_students.html

Have additional questions about OCI? Check out our OCI thread on the Discussion Board of the Loyola Law CSO Facebook page!
www.facebook.com/pages/Chicago-IL/Loyola-Law-CSO/247775867902
International Law Summer Stipends

The Law School's International Programs Committee will offer summer stipends to students who work in unpaid or low-paying jobs related to international law. Approximately five stipends, in amounts of up to $3,000, will be available.

Students must find their own jobs. Preference will be given to students who work abroad over those who work in the U.S. There will also be a strong preference for those who find international jobs working for not-for-profit or government organizations, but other forms of employment providing international experience will also be considered.

Applicants should submit the following materials:
1) A current resume
2) Employer & job description, including salary, if any
3) Amount of stipend requested
4) A personal statement of no more than 3 pages, double-spaced covering:
   - Your prior experience in international law & practice,
   - Details of your current interests in that area, and
   - How this job relates to or advances those interests
5) A letter from the employer providing:
   - A description of the function of services of the organization,
   - A description of the duties of the student,
   - An explanation of how the student will be supervised, and
   - An explanation of what compensation, if any, will be provided to the student

Please forward your application materials via email to Prof. Stacey Platt at splatt@luc.edu by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 9.

Questions can be directed to Prof. Platt at splatt@luc.edu or at 312-915-7931.

Student Debt Relief: Income-Based Repayment & Public Service Loan Forgiveness

Join Heather Jarvis of Equal Justice Works to learn more about the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

A must attend for anyone with high student debt who is contemplating work for the government or a non-profit employer.

April 6th | 12:15 p.m.
Northwestern Law | MC195 Strawn

Judicial Clerkships: Application Nuts & Bolts

2Ls interested in applying for Judicial Clerkships must attend this program detailing the ins & outs of the federal clerkship application process.

Wednesday, April 14th @ 12:00 p.m.
Corboy Law Center, Room 1101

If you are unable to attend, please contact Maureen Kieffer at mkieffer1@luc.edu.

Learn to Market Yourself as a New Lawyer

All lawyers today must learn to market themselves in order to bring in business and keep their jobs. The problem is that most new lawyers don't know how to do this!

You are invited to attend "Learn to Market Yourself as a New Lawyer" with Bob Gero, Chief Marketing Officer at Hinshaw & Culbertson in Chicago and Strategic Partner of a successful Philadelphia marketing company. Mr. Gero will share the same expertise and advice he is paid to share with lawyers.

Thursday, April 8th @ 12:00 p.m.
Corboy Law Center, Room 1104

OUTLaw & LAGBAC proudly present
Speed Networking

Tuesday, April 6th @ 5:30—7:30 p.m.
Lewis Towers (111 E. Pearson), Beane Hall—13th Floor

Loyola University Chicago OUTLaw and LAGBAC invite attorneys and law students from Chicago-area schools to join us for this fun networking opportunity. Speed networking is an alternative and enjoyable networking format that cuts out the awkward icebreakers.

A cocktail reception will follow immediately after the event at Devon Seafood Grill, 39 E. Chicago Avenue.

RSVP required.
RSVP to Stephen Murphy at smurphy1@luc.edu.

Equal Justice Works Summer Corps 2010

Summer Corps is an AmeriCorps-funded program that in 2010 will provide 577 law students with the opportunity to earn a $1,000 education award voucher for dedicating their summer to a qualifying legal project at a nonprofit public interest organization.

EJW will begin accepting applications April 1st.
For more information or to apply, please visit: http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/programs/summercorps/general

Skadden Fellowship Info Session
Thursday, April 15th @ 12:00 p.m.
Northwestern Law

Northwestern will be hosting this info session on the Skadden Fellowship program. 2Ls interested in applying for a fellowship should plan to attend this program.

For more info on the fellowship program, visit: http://www.skaddenfellowships.org
Alumni Spotlight: Brian Gallagher, Child Law LLM ’97

In January of 1997, I was the first recipient of an LLM in Child Law from Loyola and during my time there, Loyola’s first editor of the Children’s Legal Rights Journal. It was truly a great opportunity. I will always be grateful to Loyola and to Dean Diane Geraghty (who will always be my favorite professor) for trusting me with that position.

I have spent the majority of my sixteen years as an attorney working as a criminal prosecutor. After spending many years handling violent felonies in Camden, New Jersey, I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Childhood Studies at Rutgers University. Prior to completing my dissertation, which remains unfinished, I took a position in the Criminal Division of the Attorney General’s Office of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Saipan is about as far as one can get from Chicago, both geographically and culturally. In a nutshell, neither the food nor the music is nearly as good here as it is back home. That is, of course, an unfair comparison. No place on earth has food or music as good as Chicago. However, the weather on Saipan is much better.

While in law school, I never anticipated that I would become a trial attorney. Nevertheless, since completing my LLM at Loyola, I have tried over 200 cases. I was drawn to criminal prosecution because it is the only job in the law where the mandate is to do whatever is right. Any good prosecutor grades him/herself on serving the interests of justice, not the number of convictions. While serving interests of justice does not pay as well as serving individual clients, it does provide one with a sense of satisfaction that cannot be matched in almost any other profession.

During my legal career, I have handled a large number of high profile cases and secured many convictions. For example, I earned a guilty verdict in a trial of a very prominent businessman who had been sexually assaulting little girls for many years. The twenty-point headline in the local paper just said “GUILTY!” I was also the first prosecutor to obtain a sentence of life without parole pursuant to a New Jersey law that requires such a sentence for persons with three violent First Degree felony convictions (carjacking, homicide, armed robbery, etc.). However, it is the contact with the victims that gives me the greatest satisfaction. I vividly recall the letter sent to my supervisor from a victim in a sexual assault case I prosecuted. In her letter, the victim stated that she felt that, regardless of the outcome of the trial, she was happy to have gone through the legal process because of the way that “her own personal prosecutor” helped her get through it. I remember when the mother of a homicide victim hugged me in the courtroom while a jury was deliberating because my team and I helped her regain her trust in the criminal justice system. The mother of one sexual assault victim called me regularly for years, sometimes just because her daughter needed help with her homework. Experiences like that get us all through the tough days.

Working in Saipan is a challenge. It is a place of breathtaking beauty. However, the legal system is poorly developed. Law enforcement (including the prosecutors’ office) is poorly funded and understaffed. Chronic personnel shortages force us to work overtime to catch up rather than get ahead. There is also a sense of entitlement on behalf of the ruling class that borders on hubris. All of those things make the job tough at times. However, the difficulties make the successes that much sweeter.

My work at Loyola opened up a career path for me that I never expected. Because of the legal and ethical background I gained at Loyola, I have had the opportunity to do the following: crawl through vermin infested crack dens on my hands and knees; get called out of bed to at all hours of the night to go to drug sets, coroners’ offices and emergency rooms; listen to battered spouses (some with the dried blood still on their faces) beg me to drop charges against their victimizer because “he said he would be there for the baby;” and speak to an infinite number of little children about the things that some bad adult (often mommy or daddy) did to them. I have been called every name I can think of, and I once had a defendant’s father-in-law tell me that my eternal soul would be cast into the fiery pit on Judgment Day. In return I get to work in a tiny office with peeling paint, and receive a paycheck that is roughly one-third of that which many of my law school classmates earn.

However, I know that every day my obligation is to serve the interests of justice. My team and I do that as best we can. That is an experience that I would not trade for anything.

My advice to young attorneys is to find an area of practice that gets you excited to get out of bed in the morning. Find a group of attorneys who know more than you do, listen to what they say, and then make your own decisions. Try not to make mistakes, but don’t be afraid of them. Treat your clients and witnesses with respect, not as a means to an end. If you do those things, hopefully you can be like the attorney who mentored me at the prosecutor’s office in New Jersey. Even after 30 years in law enforcement, he came to work every morning and said “I can’t believe that they pay me to do this job.” More often than not, I feel the same way.

Brian Gallagher — fifth from the left — with his co-workers.