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Law School Forum: William and Mary Law School

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Dean Davison M. Douglas

William and Mary Law School



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As all law students know, we currently face a very challenging legal market. What can law students do to succeed in finding work in this difficult environment? Here are some actions that I would suggest.

Pursue opportunities to gain all the legal experience that you can — both during the summer and academic year. Every law school has a robust externship program; take advantage of those opportunities. In this job market, experience in a variety of legal settings is critically important.

Educate yourself about the job market. Law schools provide a range of programs designed to educate students about different kinds of law practice. At William and Mary, we bring in dozens of lawyers each year to meet with our students in small and large settings to discuss particular practice specialties. These gatherings are extremely valuable, as you gain important information about different areas of practice and can make contacts in a field or city in which you wish to practice law. Attend these sessions; afterwards, introduce yourself to those attorneys whose work is of particular interest to you.

Establish relationships in the legal market and maintain them. If you want to practice law

learn something valuable and maybe an important connection.

Stay in touch. If you've worked somewhere during the summer or during the academic year, or you've met a lawyer from whom you've sought advice, stay in touch. You need a large legal network. Find reasons to maintain your professional relationships.

Be willing to volunteer in a legal setting. When you are young, experience is the most valuable compensation that you receive (even more than the money). If you cannot secure a paid summer job, then approach legal employers and offer to work for free.

Always go the extra mile. When you do secure work (either paid or volunteer), do an excellent job. Develop a reputation for doing thorough and reliable work. At the end of the day, your performance will be what makes the difference.

Stay positive. All you need is one opportunity to prove yourself. When it comes, make the most of it.

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in a particular city, reach out to your law school's alumni in that city and ask for a fifteen-minute meeting in which you seek advice on finding work in that area. Most people are happy to give a younger person advice. In the process, you'll