

1987

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Repository Citation

LeBel, Paul A., "A Guide for the Selection of Faculty Recruiters...Or Any First Year Course" (1987). *Faculty Publications*. 941.
<https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/facpubs/941>

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A Guide for the Selection of Faculty Recruiters—“ . . . Or Any First Year Course”

Paul A. LeBel

In each of the past several years, more than 700 people have registered with the Association of American Law Schools as applicants for law teaching jobs. If we assume that approximately 15-20% of those who might be interested in a faculty position do not appear in the Faculty Appointments Register, it would be possible to conclude that there are somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,000 job applicants in any given year. They compete for 125 or so jobs available annually.

Screening such a large number of applicants places a considerable strain on law school faculty recruiting committees. The AALS Annual Recruiting Conference at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare provides an opportunity for schools to interview the more promising candidates, but the Conference often turns into a contest among the schools to schedule 30-minute interviews with the same twenty-five candidates.

Periodically, officers and other influential people (and some who are not so influential) within AALS issue statements to the effect that something needs to be done about making the faculty recruitment process more effective, more efficient, or more sensitive. Occasionally, there are even suggestions about what might be done to accomplish one or more of these sometimes conflicting goals. Such proposals are often less than compelling because they miss the point at which the greatest improvement might be made—the selection of the faculty members who attend the Annual Recruiting Conference.

It is as a public service that I offer the following multiple choice examination to be administered to potential members of faculty recruitment committees for use as part of the vital but too often overlooked process of deciding who will be sent to Chicago. Grading the examination, of course, is subject to the specific goals and aspirations of each school, so no attempt will be made to provide an answer key. (Anyone interested in numerical values the author applies to the various options, however, may receive the code by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the author.)

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EXAMINATION

The Examination contains NINE (9) questions (I could not think of a tenth), and each presents THREE (3) choices, A, B, and C. There are no “wrong” answers, but one answer is most correct. Check the ONE (1) answer you think is most correct. You will receive THREE (3) points if you select the most correct answer, TWO (2) points for the next most correct answer, and ONE (1) point if you select the least correct answer. If you wish to attend the Recruiting Conference in Chicago, you should try to achieve a score of TWENTY-SEVEN (27) points. If you have ever been to the Conference, you know that a perfect score is NINE (9) points. [Note: If you do not agree with the last statement, add THREE (3) points to your score.]

1. Which of the following would you consider the best answer to the question, “Why do you want to go into teaching?”:
 - A. My practice doesn’t leave me enough time to pursue in any real depth the topics I’m interested in, and I want to engage in a more intellectual approach to the law.
 - B. I’ve always wanted to teach, and I thought that spending a few years in practice would be beneficial, in order to expand what I could offer both as a teacher and a scholar.
 - C. Since I was six years old, I’ve had two weeks off in December and a three-month summer vacation, and I see no reason to change that.
2. Which of the following would you consider the best answer to the question, “What are you interested in teaching?”:
 - A. My main interest has always been in the public law area, but as long as I could do some public law courses, I’d be willing to contribute in whatever way I could.
 - B. The articles I’ve written in practice were primarily dealing with commercial law and bankruptcy, and I’d like to concentrate on those general areas.
 - C. Well, I’ve spent the last five years working on a terrifically interesting municipal bond offering, so I’d expect to do at least one course and a seminar that drew on my expertise there. Oh, and of course I could do any first year course, since I kept my notes from law school.
3. Which of the following would you consider the best answer to the question, “Are there any questions that we might answer about our law school?”:
 - A. I’m familiar with the LSAT and GPA profiles of your student body, but what are your students like as people?
 - B. Do you find that your library is adequate for the research that you do?
 - C. How close is the nearest golf course, and is it open on weekday mornings?
4. Which of the following comes closest to describing your primary reason for wanting to go to the recruitment conference:
 - A. Personnel matters are the most important aspect in the growth of a law school, and I want to play a significant role in shaping the future of the school.

- B. The recruitment conference is an opportunity to help people overcome many of the barriers that have traditionally existed to entry into law teaching, and I want to contribute to the process.
 - C. I like to eat in a restaurant where eight floors of people can look down at you, and then go watch the dirty movie on the cable television.
5. Who among the following has been to too many recruitment conferences?
- A. The person who knows enough people from other law schools so that the reception on the first evening is not just an exercise in reading name badges.
 - B. The person who schedules all of the school's interviews in order to eat no meals within the confines of the Hyatt Regency O'Hare.
 - C. The person who knows both the location and the closing time of the video game arcade inside the O'Hare terminal, and when to catch the last free shuttle bus back to the hotel.
6. Which credentials seem to be the most promising indicators that a person should be interviewed at the recruitment conference?
- A. High class rank at a top twenty law school, and a good judicial clerkship.
 - B. A respectable publication while on law review, and some evidence of intellectual curiosity and perseverance.
 - C. A whole slew of Ph.D.'s obtained both before and after law school.
7. Before going to the cocktail party for job applicants you would:
- A. Brush your teeth and make sure your clothes aren't wrinkled.
 - B. Memorize the names of the people with whom you have scheduled interviews, so that if you meet any of them, you can impress them with your interest and concern.
 - C. Set yourself on fire and jump from the seventh floor crosswalk.
8. The most discouraging sight likely to be seen while at the recruitment conference is:
- A. The long lines of planes waiting to take off at O'Hare.
 - B. Just about any cabload of law professors returning to the hotel after 2:00 a.m.
 - C. The faculty members who attend the conference ostensibly to recruit for their own schools, but who then spend their time trolling for jobs for themselves.
9. You would consider a recruitment conference to have been a success if:
- A. You are able to find half a dozen good prospects who are interested in coming to your school for further interviews.
 - B. You identify some people whose career progression you can watch, in case your needs match their qualifications and interests in the future.
 - C. You don't want to strangle the other members of your school's recruitment team by Sunday morning.

The examination is obviously incomplete. All Hyatt Regency O'Hare veterans are invited to contribute one or more questions of their own design. Please send the questions (and suggested grading key) to the author. If the harvest of questions is of sufficient quality and quantity, a more complete test will be submitted to the *Journal of Legal Education* for possible publication. Appropriate attribution, of course, is guaranteed.