You probably remember the Office of Career Services (OCS) as a place to go with questions about private sector employers and on-campus interviews or a place to find a friendly ear and advice on career concerns. The OCS office has moved from the basement level to the new Student Services wing on the third floor of the library tower, with those functions intact. But along the way, we changed some familiar programs and expanded our focus.

The latest in a series of changes and the most important for those of you who come back each fall to recruit is that on-campus interviews have moved to August 17 through 28 in 2009. Interviewers will now get to visit Chicago in summer and current students will get to visit employers for callbacks in September before classes resume.

For those of you who have not visited us as interviewers or whose employers have not received the level of student interest you might prefer, we invite you to interview in August 2009. This generation of students seems increasingly interested in looking at employers that span the spectrum of size, type and number of practice areas, and geographic location. Students more than ever are looking for the “right fit” and are keenly aware that one size employer does not fit all.

This schedule change requires a bit of context. In the last decade, law schools that have large-volume, on-campus interview programs have moved toward earlier and more compressed fall interview schedules. This trend began as a way to minimize the disruption to fall classes that on-campus interviews and callbacks created, but gained traction as employers became more concerned about meeting their hiring needs early while also guarding against making too many offers or late season offers that might yield more...
than their targeted number of summer or permanent associates. Guidelines promulgated for fall 2008 by NALP (The Association for Legal Career Professionals) contributed to this acceleration by specifying that employers could expect a law student to respond to an offer of employment forty-five days after the offer was made.

In the late fall of 2008 these forces coalesced with a weakening economy, leading the Office of Career Services to review what adjustments we might make that would allow the on-campus interview program to maintain its strength and vitality even if the economy did not rebound by fall of 2009. A review of what other high-volume interview law schools planned for the coming fall indicated that if we did not move our on-campus dates to August, we would be very late, indeed at the end, of a recruiting process that could fill early with talent from these other high-volume schools. August interview dates were an idea whose time had come. They provide students with an opportunity to enter the legal job market earlier, schedule callback interviews with maximum flexibility throughout the month of September, and return to their classes with far less disruption at the beginning of the academic year.

In addition to changes in well-established programs, the expanded focus of OCS has taken numerous forms:

• introduction of 1L students to law firms through firm•wise, a program designed to provide information about private sector opportunities well before the private-firm market begins;
• creation of the International Human Rights Internship Program for 1L and 2L students;
• preparation for the job search earlier and more consistently via interview coaching; and
• increased information and guidance for those seeking fellowships as post-JD career opportunities.

Begun in 2007, the firm•wise program invites approximately sixty law firms to visit the Law School for one evening during spring quarter. The program is designed to provide 1L students with the opportunity to talk one-on-one with practicing lawyers—most of whom are alums—about what life is like in a particular firm, practice, or geographic location. Students have raved about the program as an opportunity to get their feet wet with firms and potential interviewers before they dive headlong into the wave of summer and
fall recruiting. Firms report that the program increases their visibility on campus before students are required to make decisions about which employers they would like to see in the on-campus interviews. If your firm or employer has not participated in firm•wise and you are interested in an invitation for this event in the future, please contact Susan Staab at sstaab@law.uchicago.edu.

The International Human Rights Internship Program, new in the summer of 2009, capitalizes on the growing interest among students in this area and the addition of new faculty with expertise and experience in this field. In this initial year, Professors Rosalind Dixon, Thomas Ginsburg, and Martha Nussbaum forged arrangements with international human rights organizations to have University of Chicago law students work with these entities for the summer. Some students also had the opportunity to conduct research for the professors in addition to their work in-country with the human rights organizations. The response from the students has been very enthusiastic, yielding over forty applications for the program. Ultimately, about a dozen law students will be working this summer on legal and policy issues for human rights organizations in Australia, India, Korea, and South Africa.

The third area of expansion in the Office of Career Services—interview coaching—takes the form of one-on-one feedback rather than the provision of new programs for multiple attendees. Interview coaching draws on both career counseling and performance coaching to identify interview behaviors that might make a law student/job candidate less appealing to an interviewer. The coaching session moves beyond the identification of potential problems and with the coach’s guidance enables the student to identify and practice more appropriate interview behaviors. Effective coaching sessions not only lead to more successful
MEET the FELLOWS

Kristin Greer Love and Kent Qian were each awarded Skadden Fellowships to pursue projects they designed. The Skadden Fellowship program is the nation’s premier fellowship program and has been called “a legal Peace Corps” by the Los Angeles Times.

Kristin will be working with Centro de los Derechos del Migrante dealing with the rights of Mexican guest workers. She is a Truman Scholar who attended the University of Chicago as an undergraduate. She has worked with numerous public service organizations serving immigrants and working on environmental issues. She has interned with an art collective in South Africa and is also a Boston-qualified marathon runner.

Kent will be working with the National Housing Law Project in Oakland, California, on housing foreclosures and assisting evicted tenants in Northern California. He holds an MS and a BS in physics and has conducted research on a variety of topics in this area, including the physics of baseball. He has worked on a variety of legal issues, including housing, employment, parole hearings, and intellectual property.

Dominique Nong accepted a post-graduation fellowship with the Southern Poverty Law Center, the renowned civil rights center in Montgomery, Alabama. Dominique will be working primarily on juvenile justice and school-to-prison pipeline litigation and campaigns. She received a BA in social studies from Harvard. She has been an active member of the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic’s Criminal and Juvenile Justice Project and serves as a member of the Clinic Board. She has taught English in Vietnam as well as to Chinese immigrants in America.

Grisel Ruiz was granted the Sutro Fellowship from the law firm of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman. Grisel will be working with the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation to provide legal assistance and education to immigrant female farm workers who are subject to sexual harassment and abuse. She received degrees in political science and Spanish from Notre Dame, where she participated in varsity track and field. She has worked in a variety of public sector organizations, including a legal aid center, a public defender’s office, an immigrant rights center, and the U.S. Attorney’s office for the Central District of California.

Interviews, but also provide the law student with interview skills and interpersonal sensitivities and techniques that will serve a lawyer well in practice. Over the last year, the Office of Career Services has conducted more than 260 coached interview sessions. These coaching sessions are open to all JD students beginning in their first year and to LLM students while they are at the Law School.

With an increasingly diverse student body comes increasingly diverse career goals. While most University of Chicago Law students continue to either accept a judicial clerkship or become law firm associates as their first positions after law school, an increasing number of students are eager to explore public interest and public service while at the Law School and after. To make this exploration possible, the Office of Career Services provides a broad array of programs, job fairs, electronic databases, printed materials, organizational memberships, and alumni contacts to ease access to information about this sector of the legal profession. Working closely with interested student groups, OCS now also provides an e-mail list with frequent job notices sent to all students with an interest in public service so they need only check their e-mail to find out about current opportunities. This increased activity devoted to careers in public service seems to be paying off. In this academic year, four current students have been awarded prestigious public interest fellowships including two Skadden fellowships, a Sutro Fellowship, and a fellowship through the Southern Poverty Law Center (see sidebar).

We hope that you will join us for firm-wise or on-campus interviewing over the next few months. We look forward to introducing you to the current generation of excellent Chicago students—they are your future colleagues.