

Intellectual Property Curricular Advice

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Most of what I have to offer appears in the **Student Curricular Guide by Areas of Practice**, also on our website. A few comments didn't seem to fit, so I post them here.

Employers' Perspectives

Before considering specific course selections, students should understand that employment opportunities are influenced by more than transcripts and bar passage.

People with relevant non-legal backgrounds enjoy advantages. All else being equal, clients prefer lawyers with experience or education related to their business. Thus, students formerly employed in particular industries will later find their experience helpful in offering useful as well as correct legal advice to people in those industries.

Consider, too, knowledge of foreign languages and culture. As the U.S., Canada and Mexico merge into one market under the North American Free Trade Agreement, Spanish and French should be increasingly important. Also, the growing importance of global trade may offer expanded opportunities for people familiar, for example, with Asian and European cultures and language. Such familiarity will surely be helpful in many IP jobs.

Summer programs in China and Ireland are therefore useful for that reason alone. At a minimum, students should get to know some of their classmates drawn from around the globe.

Students should also know that hiring attorneys often say that they are far more interested in candidates' writing and other communication abilities than in their schools, grades or class rank. This should make curricular options such as the Annual Survey of NH Law, Advanced Appellate Advocacy, IDEA and Pierce Law Review attractive, but it is important to know that the last two make one-time offers for limited positions only to first-year students in mid-spring.

Writing competitions also deserve a close look — particularly those in which papers written for IP courses can be entered.

Finally, students with little or no work experience can reduce that gap with clinics or a wide array of possible externships. If, for whatever reason, that isn't possible, many opportunities for volunteer legal work are available — particularly in the non-profit sector.

Further Advice

Generic advice is necessarily limited by diversity in pre-law employment and education, as well as by diversity in career and other objectives. Students determined to get the most from Pierce Law's wide-ranging IP offerings should consult as many sources as possible. Among these are Career Services, practicing lawyers, and faculty who teach courses being considered — as well as students who have already completed them.

Joining the Student IP Law Association or the local student chapter of the Licensing Executives Society is useful for meeting and exchanging employment and other information with classmates and more senior students. Moreover, taking an active role in such organizations enhances opportunities to network with, and learn from, practicing attorneys.

Depending on individual interests, the ABA IP Section, the American Intellectual Property Law Association, the Copyright Society, the Federal Circuit Bar Association, and the Int'l Trademark Association should all be considered with such ends in mind. Most, if not all, professional organizations have reduced rates for students. Some have job fairs and otherwise assist in finding jobs. All host meetings where students can verify their competence as well as commence networking. Finally, electronic and print publications of professional organizations also convey a good sense of topics of current interest to practitioners — things very helpful to know before sending out resumes or when preparing for job interviews.