

LEGAL EMPLOYERS

Reflecting on Recruiting Timelines

Key Insights: What Law Students Said



45.4% of 1L respondents said they considered Big Law as a potential employment sector since starting law school.



72.6% said accelerated recruiting timelines affected their first-year experience.



19.3% of 1L respondents learned about accelerated recruiting timelines through law-firm-hosted networking events.

- **Interest in a career in Big Law grew once law school began.** Among survey respondents, 39.9% reported having considered Big Law employment before starting law school, but that number grew to 45.4% once law school had begun.
- **Earlier recruiting timelines are affecting the first-year experience and 1L students' views of Big Law careers.** Early recruiting timelines affected 72.6% of respondents' first-year experience, with many expressing general dissatisfaction, others writing about the negative impact on their ability to prioritize academic work, and some saying it resulted in a loss of interest in Big Law. Overall, 55.5% reported it negatively affected their first-year experience.
- **Relatively few students learned about Big Law recruiting timelines directly from Big Law firms.** Only 19.3% of respondents reported learning about these timelines through law-firm-hosted networking events; most of these respondents were enrolled in highly selective law schools. Students were more likely to learn about recruiting timelines from their law school career office, current or former law students, and faculty.

Why This Matters

- **Accelerated recruitment timelines shape who enters — and who is excluded from — the talent pool.** When hiring occurs earlier, fewer students are aware of Big Law opportunities or sufficiently prepared to compete for them, particularly because many 1L students continue developing core legal skills after these early decisions are made.
- **Accelerated recruiting may mean missing out on strong candidates.** Law students vary widely in when they learn about recruiting timelines, when they begin engaging with a school's career services office, and when they develop confidence and clarity about their career goals.
- **Recruiting too early, then, can favor students who have greater access to information and networks,** while excluding talented candidates who are unaware of the timelines and/or develop later in the first year. In this way, employers who recruit early risk narrowing their pool — and overlooking qualified candidates.

Key Considerations

As a legal employer, you may want to consider these factors when recruiting law students.

1. When Do You Recruit?

- At what point do 1L students meaningfully demonstrate the **skills needed for success** in the legal profession, such as legal analysis and reasoning, professional judgment, and communication and teamwork skills?
- How does **your recruiting timeline** align with the timeline of students' educational development?

2. What Are the Benefits of Your Recruiting Timeline?

- **Earlier recruiting** may help your firm get in front of candidates before your competitors.
- Conversely, **later recruiting** may allow access to more developed skills, stronger academic performance data, and a broader and more prepared candidate pool.

3. Where Do You Recruit?

- Do you engage 1L students exclusively through **on-campus** networking and interview programs, or do you also offer online networking opportunities and accept direct applications?
- Are your recruitment efforts focused on a **limited set of schools**? How might expanding recruitment locations increase your access to untapped talent?
- Consider **multiple touchpoints** across the law school timeline. Could you find additional strong candidates in later-engaging students; students gaining experience through clinics, public interest, or government roles; or students pursuing judicial internships?

4. What Are You Looking for in a Candidate?

- Which **competencies and skills matter most**, and **when** do students typically demonstrate these skills during legal education?
- Do your accelerated recruitment decisions precede these developmental milestones? (Many students begin to demonstrate key skills after they complete foundational coursework, receive feedback from legal writing and research instruction, and engage in other learning experiences during law school.)

Key Takeaway for Employers

Recruiting strategies signal who belongs in the profession. Employers that thoughtfully assess *when*, *where*, and *how* they recruit are better positioned to access a wider range of capable, motivated future lawyers — and to **align hiring practices with how legal talent develops**.

[Download the report](#) to learn more about how accelerated recruiting timelines are affecting the first-year experience.

