Common FIP Questions

1. Why is FIP so saturated with large law firms? Because I am not interested in large firms I shouldn’t “do” FIP, right?

Every year CDO invites many employers to attend FIP, including hundreds of public interest employers. In addition, CDO waives all registration fees and room fees for public interest employers. Despite these facts, only a small number of smaller law firms and public interest employers attend FIP. These employers do not know their hiring needs or funding a full year in advance. In addition, many of these employers suffer from lack of student interest when they do come to campus. Students interested in smaller firms and/or public interest work should check the list of registered FIP employers. The beauty of FIP is that you can use the program to interview with as many or as few employers as you wish. It would be a shame to pass up the opportunity to interview with employers for whom you have a genuine interest by neglecting to consider FIP as an avenue for finding employment.

2. What do I do if an employer I am interested in is not coming to FIP or is not interviewing for the location in which I am interested?

Many students will supplement their FIP interviews by reaching out directly to employers not participating in FIP. Although not all employers follow the same hiring timeline, it is best to start applying in early August. For larger firms, use the NALP Directory (www.nalpdirectory.com) to determine the recruiting contact. For other employers, contact them directly to determine the appropriate recipient of your application. To start, email a cover letter, resume and transcript. Employers may request additional materials later in the process. If a law firm is interviewing at FIP for a location of interest to you, you can mention your interest in additional locations during your interview.

3. How many bids should I make?

Unfortunately, there is not one correct answer to this question. Do your research and then decide. Are there 10, 15, 20 or 25 employers that you have determined are interesting to you? Then bid on those employers (keeping in mind that the lower the number of bids, the more likely it is that you may need to supplement that job search with other efforts outside of FIP). Are you too busy to conduct your research before bids are due so you decide to bid on all 35 employers coming from your geographic area of interest? Don’t do it—35 interviews is too many to conduct; you will potentially be taking interview slots from students who are seriously interested in those employers; and you will frustrate CDO staff when you come in to cancel interviews. The average number of 2L bids in 2014 was 22. Look at the interview statistics from last year, available in the FIP guide, to determine which employers were most “popular”—this will give you an idea of how much competition you will face for interviews and offers. Finally, you must also factor in your own comfort level when making bids. Some students treat bidding like applying to school by selecting some good options, some reaches, and some safety employers.

4. All these FIP firms look the same, how do I choose?

These firms can all look the same. Unfortunately, choosing among them takes some work on your part. What are your primary interests? Is it most important to you to be involved in a particular practice area? Or is the location of the employer a paramount concern? Are you driven by an interest in making a lot of money? In finding an employer that will allow you time for your outside interests/family? In being able to pursue pro bono work? Refer to CDO’s advice on Choosing the Right Employer for You and Assessing Law Firms: Culture, Clients, Compensation and Beyond to answer these questions.
After you have determined your primary motivations, learn more about employers by reading, asking questions, and listening. Read everything you can about employers, not just their recruiting material, but the popular press as well. Read evaluations written by other students regarding their experiences with particular employers. Ask questions of friends, faculty, CDO, and others about their experiences and listen to their advice. Use YLS Career Connections to contact alumni for advice.

During the interviewing stage, ask meaningful questions, not just questions you think the employer wants to hear. Listen carefully to their responses. If you are still having trouble deciding where to go after you have received offers, ask to speak with additional attorneys at the firms so that you can ask more pointed questions.

5. I want to work for a firm, but I don't want to kill myself working. Are there options?

Yes, but you may or may not find them at FIP. Remember that FIP is comprised primarily of larger law firms in larger metropolitan areas. Many of these firms correctly have the “sweatshop” label. Do your research by looking in the NALP Directory (www.nalpdirectory.com) to see what the hours are like at these firms (although be aware that many firms understate their hours). To have an understanding of what these billable hour requirements really mean, refer to CDO’s *The Truth about the Billable Hour*. Ask questions about these issues during interviews. In addition, consider exploring opportunities with smaller firms in smaller cities. We hear time and again from graduates practicing in smaller communities who speak very positively about their ability to balance work, personal life, and community involvement.

6. What are my chances of getting an offer from a FIP interview?

This question is difficult to answer in that these statistics vary depending on the economic climate, the interviewing approach taken by a particular employer, and the interviewing ability and qualifications of the candidate. Typically around 50% of 2L interviews result in a callback invitation and over 70% of 2L callback interviews resulted in offers. Third-year students typically have more difficulty obtaining callback interviews and securing offers than second-year students, and we anticipate 3L interviewing will be very limited this fall.

7. Why should I attend employer receptions or visit their hospitality suites during FIP?

Some employers host receptions at various local restaurants around the time of FIP or host a hospitality suite during their day of interviews. If you have an interest in the employer, attending an event they host is one way to learn more about the employer and make a good impression. Even if you don’t have a serious interest in the employer, you still may wish to attend to (1) network with YLS alumni; (2) learn more about a particular city or practice area; (3) practice your networking skills; and (4) eat good food.

8. How long do I have to respond to employment offers?

Once you receive an offer, the amount of time you have to decide depends on whether the employer is a member of NALP. Non-NALP employers have the right to require a response to an offer at any time. Upon receipt of an offer from a non-NALP employer, you should inquire as to when the employer expects a response. For NALP member employers (most larger law firms and some public interest organizations), NALP provides standards for the timing of offers and decisions as reflected in Part V of NALP’s General...

Bulleted below are some of the more pertinent NALP Guidelines and interpretations for students participating in FIP.

- Employers offering positions for the following summer to candidates not previously employed by them should leave those offers open for at least 28 days following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within 14 days from the date of the offer letter. Employers may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 14 day period. Offers made after December 15 for the following summer should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within 14 days from the date of the offer letter. Employers may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 14-day period. (Part V.C.1) In the interpretations, NALP adds that offers made before a law school's fall interview program begins to a law student candidate not previously employed by the employer should not expire until at least 28 days from the first day of the law school's fall interview program. (Interpretation #20)

- Employers offering positions for the following summer to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open until at least October 1, provided that such offers are made prior to or on September 2. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within thirty days from the date of the offer letter. Employers may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 30 day period. After September 2, employers offering positions for the following summer to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open for at least 28 days following the date of the offer letter. (Part V.C.3)

- Employers offering candidates positions for the following summer and having a total of 40 attorneys or fewer in all offices are exempted from Paragraphs 1-3 of this Section. Instead, offers made on or before December 15 should remain open for at least three weeks following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first, and offers made after December 15 should remain open for at least two weeks. (Part V.C.4)

- Students may request that an employer extend the deadline to accept the employer’s offer until as late as April 1 if the student is actively pursuing positions with public interest or government organizations. Students may hold open only one offer in such circumstances. Employers are encouraged to grant such requests. (Part V.C.2). (At YLS, we ask all employers registering for FIP to inform us whether they will keep an offer open until April 1 under these circumstances. Employer responses to this question are listed in CMS in the Notes section).

- Candidates are expected to accept or release offers or request an extension by the applicable deadline. Offers that are not accepted by the offer deadline expire. (Part A.2)

- A candidate should not hold open more than five offers of employment at any one time. For each offer received that places a candidate over the offer limit, the candidate should, within one week of receipt of the excess offer, release an offer. (Part A.3)

If you find yourself under a deadline to respond to an employer, but you are not sure if you want to accept the position, come speak with a counselor in CDO. Many employers, both NALP and non-NALP members, are amenable to providing additional time for you to make a decision. However, keep in mind that asking for more time may be a signal to the employer that they are not your first choice. Ultimately, it is significantly better to ask for more time than to accept and later renege on your offer. Reneging is
unprofessional and reflects poorly on you and the Law School. For more information regarding when and how to accept and decline offers of employment, consult CDO’s advice on *Accepting and Declining Employment Offers*.

One alternative to seeking an extension is to accept with the employer for part of the summer, while still exploring other options for the other part. Refer to *To Split or Not to Split, That is the Question*, for additional advice about the pros and cons of splitting the summer.

Ultimately, you should strive to make a decision as quickly as you can once you have gathered the information you need. This is especially true in the current economic climate where students are generally making decisions more quickly than in the past. Holding offers for longer than necessary is frustrating to employers and may prohibit another YLS student from receiving an offer.

**9. Should I split my summer between two employers?**

Generally speaking, because second-year students will already have had some experience with a legal employer and a year of law school under their belts, they have the ability to hit the ground running. As a result, some of the potential downsides to splitting, such as not having enough time to thoroughly explore the position, to develop mentor relationships, or to rehabilitate in the event of a mistake or misjudgment are not as worrisome. For a more detailed answer to this question, consult CDO’s *To Split or Not to Split, That is the Question*. In addition, don’t forget to consult the *Firms Sponsoring Split Public Interest Summers* brochure listing those law firms who offer students the opportunity to work for a firm for half the summer and for a public interest employer the other half while getting paid by the firm for the entire summer.

**10. Why should I attend career related programs after I receive a job through FIP?**

Locating a position for the summer or after graduation is just one step in your path to determining what you want to accomplish in your career. It is not the end of the road, but the beginning. Take advantage of the opportunities presented to you in law school to explore career options and network with alumni. Time for reflection about your goals in the law often lessens as you start getting busy with work. There is a high incidence of turnover on the part of graduates who are one to three years out of school. Many recent YLS graduates who contact CDO are just starting to realize that the career path they thought they wanted isn’t making them happy. You will be well-served by continually reaching out to learn more about yourself and your career in the law.

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