Using Holiday Breaks to Further Your Career Goals

The holiday breaks are a great opportunity to talk with people about your legal career. To get started, we recommend the following steps:

- Develop a pitch
- Identify your contacts and reach out to them
- Talk with people
- Follow-up

How do I develop a pitch?

A pitch is the starting point for any conversation about your legal career. It should identify who you are and what your interest in the legal field is right now. Your pitch should include the following information:

- Your name and class year
- Your interest in the legal field – geography, practice area, employment sector, skill set

Here are a few basic examples (note: these are a starting point; your pitch will be more complex):

“Hello, my name is Casey Johns. I’m a Masters student at Vermont Law School. I am contacting you because I found your name in [INSERT HOW YOU FOUND NAME HERE]. I am enjoying my courses and want to learn more about the work your organization does.”

“Hello, my name is Dana White. I’m a Masters student at Vermont Law School. I want to talk with you about your work at the Vermont Land Trust. I’ve been studying Act 250 cases and I would like to learn more about land use externship opportunities in the nonprofit sector.”

“Hello, my name is Robin Long. I’m a Masters student at Vermont Law School. Professor Barbara Smith suggested I contact you regarding your work in Kansas City. I will be graduating in May and returning to the area in August and want to learn more about entry-level opportunities in the area.”

Who are my contacts and how do I reach out?

VLS students most often talk with the following groups during the holiday breaks:

- Friends and family
  - Be prepared to answer the question, “What are you going to do with your law degree?”
  - Practice your pitch.
- Local land trusts, conservation and/or environmental organizations
  - Research local, state, county or municipal land trusts and environmental and conservation non-profits online and explore the “Events” link.
  - Practice your pitch.
Office of Career Services

- VLS alumni
  - Locate VLS alumni by geography, practice area, and/or employment sector using [http://www.LinkedIn.com/alumni](http://www.LinkedIn.com/alumni)
  - Email your pitch (the OCS is happy to help you create/revise your email message)

- Potential employers
  - Locate potential employers online using [www.nalpdirectory.com](http://www.nalpdirectory.com) and [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com) (firms), [http://arizonahandbooks.com/u/vls](http://arizonahandbooks.com/u/vls) [username: swans] (government), and [www.psjd.org](http://www.psjd.org) (you must register but it is free) and [www.idealist.org](http://www.idealist.org) (nonprofits)
  - Email your pitch.

When I talk with people, what should I say?

If you are attending a bar association event or meeting a VLS alumni or potential employer in person, be sure to manage first impressions:

- Prepare for your conversation
- Dress professionally
- Bring a copy of your résumé
- Show up 5 minutes early
- Treat support staff with respect

Because many students are uncertain what they should be talking about, here is an example script:

- **Introduction**: Hi, my name is Jim White. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I really appreciate it.

- **Questions**: As you know, I am interested in learning more about the Land Use Law field. Can you tell me about your experiences doing this type of work? ...about the path you took to get to this point? ...about a typical day for you? What do you enjoy most about your work? ...the least? What recommendations would you give to someone interested in getting involved in this area of practice? ...suggested courses? What should I emphasize in my résumé or cover letter? What type of writing sample would you suggest including, if appropriate?

- **Future contacts**: Who else do you think I should talk to?

- **Closing**: Thank you very much for your time and advice. It has been very helpful.

How do I follow-up?

Follow-up consists of two steps: keeping a record of your conversations and sending a thank you note.

Where do I go for more information?

Career Services is committed to helping you navigate this process. To make an appointment with a counselor, call 802-831-1243, email Eli Gleason [egleason@vermontlaw.edu](mailto:egleason@vermontlaw.edu), or stop by our office, which is located on the first floor of Abbott House.