

Coaching Guide for a Meeting on Each 1L Student's ROADMAP

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I. Introduction

As a ROADMAP coach, you are part of a national movement to foster each student's professional development and formation more effectively. Each law student has to grow from being a passive student, where the student just does what the professors ask, to become a proactive lawyer owning and planning her own development including an orientation of deep care/service for the client. As a major step to facilitate each student's growth, students read Professor Hamilton's book, ROADMAP: THE LAW STUDENT'S GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT (3d ed., 2023), and create a written ROADMAP plan to use the student's remaining time in law school most effectively to achieve the student's goals of bar passage and meaningful post-graduation employment.

The ROADMAP plan template that each student will fill out and send to you is at the end of this coaching guide. The template asks the student to create a written plan to gain a breadth of experience during the student's remaining time in law school so that the student can:

1. thoughtfully begin to discern the student's passion, motivating interests, and strengths that best fit with a geographic community of practice, a practice area and type of client, and type of employer;
2. develop the student's strengths to the next level; and
3. have evidence of the student's strengths that employers value.

There are two main reasons for a 1L student at the beginning of the second semester of law school to create a written professional development plan to be revised as the student gains experience.

1. Because of legal education's traditional emphasis on doctrinal law, legal analysis, legal writing, grades, and class rank, the period right after first-semester grades come out is a particularly important transition point for many students who did not do as well academically in the fall semester as they had hoped. They need guided reflection about what the grades mean for their future, and how to gain experience and develop their strengths to realize their goals of bar passage and meaningful post-graduation employment.
2. A new entrant to any profession, law in our case, needs experience doing the work of the profession to discern where the new entrant's passion, motivating interests, and strengths best "fit" with the employment opportunities in the profession. The curriculum in medical school requires approximately 10 rotational experiences in different areas of practice, but the required curriculum at law schools does not provide a range of experience in doing the actual work of the profession. If possible, it is important for the student to gain experience – paid or unpaid - in the summer after the 1L year. A 1L student should spend some time early in the spring semester seeking and lining up good summer experience. The student should give thought to what experiences inside and outside of the law building he or she should seek in the 2L year.

II. Importance of Your Coaching Role

Empirical research points toward one-on-one coaching for each student as the most effective curriculum to foster this type of student growth.¹ It also points toward the importance of one-on-one coaching and guided reflection at the major transition points in law school, and the start of the second semester of law school is a major transition point.

Empirical evidence emphasizes three key foundational competencies for a good coach in this context:

1. actively listen to understand both where the student is developmentally and what are the student's employment goals as best the student can discern them at this time;
2. ask powerful open questions to raise the student's awareness and responsibility; and
3. facilitate the student's growth toward the next stage of development regarding the student's pro-active ownership of continuous professional development toward excellence at the competencies that employers and clients in the student's area of employment interest need, and a deep responsibility and service orientation toward others, especially the client.

III. Suggested Initial Points to Emphasize and Some Suggested Powerful Open Questions for the Meeting with the Student (NOTE: Make sure the student has some way to take notes!)

1. Begin after introductions by talking briefly about how you wish you had help of this kind during law school to create a professional development plan with feedback from veteran lawyers.

2. You could ask next about the strengths the student has identified in Steps 3 and 4 of the ROADMAP template at the end of this coaching guide. Do you think that the student's resume provides evidence of those strengths? Does the student have strong stories to support the student's strengths?

It is helpful here to make sure you have an understanding of the student's academic situation and his or her sense of how to make progress on the law school learning curve. The student may have an indication of how the first semester went on the resume. If not, ask "How did your first semester go in terms of your academic performance?" (What are your grades?) This is an important question to get answered to understand where a student is situated moving forward. For students who did not have a good first semester, that experience can be demoralizing. High grades will not be their "doorway" into initial opportunities – they will have to develop other competencies and network to create opportunities. They also will need to consider an academic support program geared toward preparing them to pass the bar exam. That is a key hurdle for them in terms of creating professional opportunities. Put students

¹ Neil Hamilton, *Mentor/Coach: The Most Effective Curriculum to Foster Each Student's Professional Development and Formation*, 17 UNIV. ST. THOMAS L.J. 836-61 (2022)(available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=3747309>)

who did not do well academically after the first semester in touch with the law school's academic support team.

3. You could discuss Step 5 of the student's ROADMAP plan. Some students struggle on this step because they don't know enough about any area of practice or type of employer to have an opinion. The key point for these students is that in order to discern where they best "fit," they need experience, and in order to get experience, it is helpful for the student to have at least a very early answer to the type of practice that may interest the student. You can help these students by looking at the strengths they have identified and using your judgment about types of practice that may be a good fit. This type of student can signal a potential employer that "I have strengths in these skills and capacities, and I think they may be a good fit for this practice area, but I am open to any experiences that will help me develop my strengths."

4. You could then turn to Step 7 of the student's ROADMAP plan. The key initial question is whether the student has lined up summer experience – paid or unpaid – that will help the student discern fit and develop the student's strengths. If the student has not lined up any summer experience (most likely will not have something lined up at this point in the semester), spend some time on helping the student with a strategy to achieve this. What specific steps on what timetable will the student take in the next two months to achieve this goal?

The student's strategy to line up good summer experience will benefit from seeing the Career and Professional Development Office. You can also help the student think through his or her "natural networks" of lawyers who will be helpful to the student in finding summer experience. Are there any lawyers in the family or extended family? Does the student have other relationships with lawyers or judges? The student may be involved with community groups like athletics, music, theatre, or other interests where there are going to be lawyers who will respond to the student's inquiry. The student's undergraduate alumni office will be able to help with names of alumni who are lawyers in the geography the student wants. In addition to possible paid positions, help the student think through volunteer positions that will provide good experience.

If the student already has summer experience lined up, and some may even have post-graduation employment already committed, then help the student focus on the capacities and skills that will most benefit the student's employer and its clients. What experiences will help the student develop those capacities and skills to the next level? The student could show his or her plan to experienced lawyers at the student's future employer and ask for feedback. Then reflect on the feedback.

The next question in Step 7 of the student's ROADMAP plan is to help the student think through how to get experiences in the 2L year, both inside and outside the building, to test fit and develop the student's strengths. What courses in the formal curriculum is the student considering? What about extracurricular activities that would help the student test fit and develop and demonstrate his or her strengths? Law Journal, Moot Court, Trial Team or Negotiation Team, leadership opportunities in student organizations, student government, etc.

What about taking a course or two in the summer so the student can work at an outside the building clerkship during the school year?

5. Step 9 of the student's ROADMAP plan focuses on building a tent of professional relationships that will help the student achieve his or her Step 7 and longer term goals. The discussion above about "natural networks" is highly relevant here also. Within the law building, the student also should have a clear plan to develop a relationship with one, or better, two professors who know the student and have seen the student's work beyond "the student got a good grade in my large section of ____."

6. You could ask the student to reflect on the major roadblocks or fears that are holding the student back with respect to any of the earlier steps.

7. You could ask the student to do a quick role play. You play the role of the hiring lawyer at the type of employer where the student would most like to get experience, and the student gets an interview with you. You start the interview with a direct question "why should we hire you?" and give the student no more than two minutes to answer the question. Or you are the hiring lawyer at the type of employer where the student most wants to get experience and by a providence, the two of you are in a situation where you ask "tell me about yourself." The student should be able to make two persuasive points about how the student would be useful for your organization.

8. We know the coaching conversation is only going to be 45 minutes generally. You don't need to cover all the above points. Rather, we want you to find the major areas of need/interest for each student and cover a range of the things the student needs to be thinking about to get from where they are to where they want to be. Phrased differently, we are looking for you to be a new voice -- a trusted and experienced voice -- who can both encourage the student *and* press him/her toward articulating and actively pursuing steps on a career path.

IV. Roadmap Template the Students Will Be Sending to You

Step 1 – Assess your passion and motivating interests in employment.

Think about the three most memorable days/weeks giving you the most positive meaning and energy in your work or service experiences.

1. Whom were you helping?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
2. To do what?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. What specific capacities and skills were you using in the work/service that yielded positive meaning and energy for you?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

Step 2 – Understand the full range of capacities and skills legal employers and clients need.

Look carefully at Tables 1 and 2 in Chapter 1.

Step 3 – Self-assess your strengths.

a. The traditional technical competencies that law schools emphasize.

Focus on the first four competencies in Table 1 in Chapter 1. The career services and academic support staff at your school will be able to help you assess whether your performance in the 1L required courses give you a persuasive story that you have a story of comparative strength at these capacities and skills or in the alternative whether you have a story of solid performance that indicates strong probabilities that you will pass the bar exam. If your grade in any 1L required course was low (talk to your career services and academic support staff to assess this), consider creating and implementing a written professional development plan with guided reflection from academic support to improve the skills you need to pass the bar.

With respect to the first four competencies in Table 1, I have:

- (1) a story of comparative strength at: _____;
- (2) a story of solid performance at: _____;
- (3) a plan to improve the skills I need to pass the bar with respect to: _____.

b. The non-technical capacities and skills in Table 3 in Chapter 1.

My top four capacities and skills from Table 3 are:

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

I have asked two different people who know my earlier work/service to fill out Table 4 and have reflected on their assessment. Based on their feedback and my reflection, I will make the following changes (if any) to my top four capacities and skills above.

Step 4 – What evidence supports your four strengths?

For each of your four strengths, indicate your best two stories from your earlier work/service including college that you are at a later stage of development on that strength.

Strength 1: _____ and _____.

Strength 2: _____ and _____.

Strength 3: _____ and _____.

Strength 4: _____ and _____.

Step 5 – Make a tentative judgment about where you would like to get employment/service experience in the next phase of your development.

Reflecting on your answers to steps 1-4 above, make a tentative judgment about where you would like to get employment/service experience in this next phase of your development. Note that the focus here is on your top two choices so that your current efforts are focused, and you are able to give guidance to experienced lawyers who are trying to help you. There may be other areas of interest down the road that you can include as you gain experience and revise your ROADMAP plan.

A. Top geographic regions: (1) _____; and (2) _____.

a. Top areas of practice/type of client: (1) _____;
and (2) _____.

b. Top type of employing organization: (1) _____; and
(2) _____.

Step 6 – What is your developmental stage regarding ownership over your professional development?

Look at Table 7 in Chapter 1 on Ownership of Continuous Professional Development. Select a stage of development and write it in below only if you have good evidence (stories) when an interviewer asks you “what evidence do you have that you are at the stage of development that you selected?”

1. Stage of development on self-assesses and identifies strengths and areas for growth:
_____.
2. Stage of development on articulates goals and follows a written plan:
_____.
3. Stage of development on acquires and learns from experience:
_____.
4. Stage of development on reflects and applies lessons learned:
_____.

Step 7 – Create a tentative plan to gain experiences, both inside and outside the law building, during your remaining time in law school that mimic as much as possible the work the lawyers do in the areas of your best “fit” regarding employment identified in Step 5 and that help you develop your strengths identified in Step 3 to the next level and have evidence of your growth.

Summer experience between the 1L and 2L years.

Do you have summer experience already lined up? If so, where? _____.

If not, what specific steps on what specific timetable are you taking to line up good summer experience?

You will be registering for the fall semester of your 2L year in the spring of your 1L year. What experience do you want in the fall of your 2L year inside the building?

Experience outside the building? _____.

Step 8 – Practice your persuasive story to your top priority potential employers.

Assume you are in a 20-minute screening interview with one of your top priority potential employers who starts the interview by asking “Tell me why we should hire you?”

Briefly list the top two points you want to make in your persuasive story that you meet the employer's needs. Assume you will have no more than two minutes to make these two points with one short supporting story on each one.

1. _____.
2. _____.

Step 9 – Outline two concrete steps with a timetable for the remainder of the 1L year and the summer between the 1L and 2L years to build a tent of professional relationships that will help you both to have good evidence of your strengths from Step 4 and to achieve your goals in Step 7.

1. Do you have one or two professors who have seen your work and can speak to your Step 4 strengths? List them. _____. If not, what is your plan to develop this type of relationship?
_____.
2. Do you have one or two lawyers or judges outside of the building who have seen your work and can speak to your Step 4 strengths? List them. _____. If not, what is your plan to develop this type of relationship?
_____.

Step 10 – Developing your habit of pro-actively seeking experience and feedback, reflecting on it, and continuously revising and improving your ROADMAP professional development plan.

Based on your experiences in the summer between 1L and the fall of your 2L year, you will revisit this ROADMAP plan with your Mentor Externship faculty member to discern the changes you want to make and then plan for experience in the spring semester of your 2L year, the summer between the 2L and 3L years, and experience in the 3L year. In this process, you are going to develop to a later stage with respect to Table 7's Milestone Model on Student Ownership of Continuous Professional Development.