

March 27, 2022

We, the student governments of Stanford Law School and Yale Law School, write jointly to urge employers participating in our on-campus interview programs to refrain from interviewing our students outside of those programs—a practice known as “precruting.” We also call upon other students, law schools, and legal employers to consider how “precruting” will adversely impact students’ first-year experiences and disadvantage students without well-developed networks, including first-generation students and students of color. Further, we ask them to preserve a recruitment timeline in which students at all law schools interview for second-year internships after completing their first-year internships.

Recently, Harvard decided to permit their students to interview with legal employers for second-year internships in the summer of their first year in law school. This led each of our career development offices to ask for our views on whether our schools should adopt similar “precruting” policies. We have both recommended that our schools maintain their prohibition on “precruting.” These views were informed by outreach to our fellow students, the vast majority of whom support this approach. We are sharing the reasons for our recommendation because we are concerned that the trend towards “precruting” and ever-earlier OCI dates will negatively impact the experiences of future students.

First, “precruting” will disadvantage students without pre-existing networks in the legal industry. “Precruting” rewards those with knowledge of the legal industry, professional and personal connections to firms and legal recruiters, and the financial means necessary to travel to interviews. As such, a recruitment model centered on “precruting” systematically disadvantages students without those resources. As a disproportionate share of these students are first-generation students or students of color, we are especially concerned about the impact “precruting” will have on those communities. Navigating law school is already exceedingly difficult and stressful for members of these communities; requiring them to navigate the world of law firms and “precruting” so early in their first year would only further disadvantage our most vulnerable students.

Second, “precruting” will limit students’ ability to explore the law and make informed career decisions. “Precruting” forces students to make significant career decisions just a few months after arriving on campus. At this early stage in their law school careers, students will have limited exposure to the wide variety of firms and legal careers available. As such, it is unlikely they will have acquired the information necessary to make informed choices for themselves. In contrast, the traditional timeline placed recruitment at the end of students’ first-year summers. This timeline gave students more time to fully experience their first legal internship, research many different legal employers, and reflect on their professional interests. It also prevented employers from needing to hire an incoming class of attorneys nearly three years before the start of their full-time employment—something March “precruting” would require. Requiring students to make increasingly premature career decisions will impede both students *and* employers from collectively finding the best fit.

Finally, “precruting” will adversely impact students’ first-year summer experiences.

“Precruting” pressures students to end their first-year internships early to interview with potential second-year summer employers. In addition, it distracts them from their first-year internships by incentivizing them to spend time planning and coordinating their job search with mentors, career development offices, and potential employers. Students will also be pressured to spend their first-year summers in cities that are home to potential future employers rather than use their first-year summer to explore geographic, legal, or organizational interests. Finally, career development offices will need to devote more of their resources to advising first-year students about recruiting for second-year summers. As a result, there will be even less time to educate first-year students about the range of opportunities available to them for their first-year summers.

Though several of our peer schools have decided to take a different approach, we are committed to maintaining a recruitment timeline that serves all our students. By preserving a system in which students interview for second-year internships after completing their first-year internships, all parties—students, law schools, and legal employers—can together ensure that first-year students have a robust, complete introduction to the study and practice of the law before making significant career decisions.

We hope our peer schools will reconsider their current “precruting” policies and that legal employers will join us in counteracting recent recruiting trends.

Signed,

The Stanford Law Association, 2021-2022

The Yale Law School Student Representatives, 2021-2022

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About The Stanford Law Association

The Stanford Law Association (SLA) is the representative organization of the Stanford Law School student body. SLA represents the interests of the Law School student body in general, and assists in the orientation of entering students, supervises student elections and referenda, and serves as a special advisory council to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

About The Yale Law School Student Representatives

As the elected student government organization of the law school, The Yale Law School Student Representatives advocate for students’ collective interests; represent the student body as a whole;

and advise the Dean, the Office of Student Affairs, and other administrators on matters relating to student well-being.