



Strategic Extracurriculars: Your Roadmap to Landing That Dream Legal Position

Law school feels like a marathon where everyone's running toward the same finish line – that coveted attorney position. While your GPA matters, savvy law students know that extracurricular activities can be the differentiator that makes recruiters take notice. The key isn't just participating in everything; it's about making strategic choices that align with your career goals and showcase your unique strengths.

Law Review: The Crown Jewel (But Not the Only One)

Law Review remains the gold standard of law school extracurriculars, and for good reason. Being on Law Review signals to employers that you can handle rigorous legal research, meet tight deadlines, and produce publication-quality work. The citation-checking might feel mind-numbing, but you're developing skills that translate directly to legal practice.

If you make Law Review, embrace it fully. Don't just coast through your cite-checking duties – volunteer for additional responsibilities. Pitch article ideas that genuinely interest you, offer to help with symposiums, and consider running for an editorial position. These leadership roles show initiative and can provide excellent talking points during interviews.

But here's the reality check: Law Review spots are limited, and plenty of successful attorneys never served on one. If you don't make it, don't panic. There are numerous other publications and activities that can serve similar purposes. Secondary journals focusing on specific practice areas like environmental law, international law, or intellectual property can actually be more valuable if they align with your career interests. Employers in specialized fields often value relevant subject matter expertise over the general prestige of Law Review.

Moot Court: Where Advocacy Skills Shine

Moot Court competitions offer something Law Review can't: the chance to develop your oral advocacy skills in real-time. Whether you're interested in litigation or not, the ability to think on your feet, respond to challenging questions, and present complex legal arguments clearly is invaluable in any legal career.

The key to maximizing your Moot Court experience is treating it like actual practice. Don't just memorize your argument –



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understand it deeply enough to handle curveballs from judges. Pay attention to how you present yourself, from your posture to your voice projection. These competitions often simulate real courtroom experiences more closely than any classroom exercise.

Consider competing in different types of competitions throughout law school. Appellate moot court teaches you to craft sophisticated legal arguments, while trial advocacy competitions help you develop fact-based storytelling skills. International law competitions can open doors to global opportunities, while specialized competitions in areas like environmental or constitutional law can demonstrate focused expertise.

Clinical Programs: Real-World Experience That Counts

Legal clinics provide something that's increasingly rare in legal education: actual client representation under supervision. This hands-on experience is pure gold on a resume because it shows you've already begun developing practical lawyering skills.

Choose clinics strategically based on your interests, but don't overlook unexpected opportunities. A tax clinic might seem dry, but it can lead to valuable skills in client counseling and dealing with government agencies. Immigration clinics are increasingly valuable as this area of law continues to evolve rapidly.

The key to maximizing clinical experience is approaching it with the same professionalism you'd bring to a paid position. Show up prepared, treat clients with respect, and go beyond minimum requirements. Supervising attorneys often become valuable references and mentors, so make sure you're someone they'd enthusiastically recommend.

Student Organizations: Leadership That Translates

Student Bar Association, specialty law organizations, and affinity groups offer opportunities to develop leadership skills while building community. The networking aspect alone makes these worthwhile, but the real value comes from taking on meaningful responsibilities.

Don't just join organizations – contribute meaningfully. Organize events that bring practicing attorneys to campus, start new initiatives that address student needs, or tackle projects that have lasting impact. These experiences demonstrate initiative and leadership potential that employers value highly.

Professional organizations related to your practice area interests are particularly valuable. The student chapters of groups like the American Bar Association sections, local bar associations, or specialty organizations often provide direct access to practicing attorneys and insider knowledge about different practice areas.

Externships and Internships: Testing the Waters

Externships and summer internships serve dual purposes: they provide practical experience and help you figure out what you actually want to do after graduation. Treat these positions as extended job interviews, because in many cases, that's exactly what they are.



Even unpaid positions can be incredibly valuable if you approach them strategically. Government externships provide insight into public service careers and often lead to post-graduation opportunities. Judicial externships offer unique perspectives on how courts operate and can be especially valuable if you're interested in litigation.

The key is making sure your supervisors know your work product and work ethic. Ask for feedback regularly, volunteer for challenging assignments, and maintain those relationships after the position ends. Many job offers come from previous supervisors or their networks.

Strategic Thinking: Quality Over Quantity

The biggest mistake law students make is trying to do everything. Employers would rather see deep involvement in a few activities than superficial participation in many. Choose activities that align with your genuine interests and career goals, then commit fully.

Consider how different activities complement each other. Law Review might showcase your research and writing skills, while Moot Court demonstrates your advocacy abilities. Adding a clinic provides practical experience, while leadership in a student organization shows your ability to manage people and projects.

Don't forget to document your experiences thoughtfully. Keep track of specific accomplishments, skills developed, and relationships built. These details become crucial when you're crafting cover letters and preparing for interviews.

The Long Game: Building Your Professional Identity

The most successful law students view extracurricular activities as opportunities to begin building their professional identity before graduation. Each activity should contribute to a coherent narrative about who you are as a future lawyer and what unique value you bring.

Remember that different employers value different experiences. Big law firms might prioritize Law Review and high-profile moot court competitions, while public interest organizations might be more interested in your clinic work and community involvement. Tailor your activities to align with your career goals, but remain authentic to your interests and values.

Your law school extracurriculars are investments in your future career. Choose wisely, commit fully, and use each opportunity to develop both your skills and your professional network. The relationships you build and the experiences you gain will pay dividends long after you graduate.

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