



Federal Bar Association

Date: March 21, 2023

To: FBA Law Student Chapter Leaders

From: Kevin A. Maxim
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Re: Guide to Planning and Producing Panels on In-House Counsel Careers

At the request of FBA President Matt Moschella, we were tasked with creating and coordinating a pilot program for FBA Law Student Chapters in two different locations. We were to help host panels at those locations for their law students on the subject of in-house counsel careers. The end-goal was to create this guide that the FBA will make available to its other FBA Law Student Chapters. The guide was to serve as a roadmap for FBA Law Student Chapters to host panels of their own and to generate value for both their Law Student Chapter Members and their greater law school communities. We hope that the product of that effort – this guide – will encourage FBA Law Student Chapters to explore opportunities to partner with their local FBA Professional Chapter(s), and to plan and host events that encourage membership and meaningful participation in the FBA.

For the two different locations, we selected New Orleans and Salt Lake City, and each city's Law Student and Professional Chapters were receptive to the idea. On February 9, 2023, we helped to host panels on Judiciary Clerkships and In-House Counsel Careers at Tulane and Loyola Law Schools in New Orleans. And on March 1, 2023, we helped to host a panel on In-House Counsel Careers at the University of Utah's School of Law, with the support of Brigham Young University's School of Law as well.

This guide is the product of what we learned through the planning and execution of these pilot program panels. We hope that it provides you a helpful roadmap to developing similar programs for your FBA Law Student Chapters, as well as pointing out a few hints and pitfalls along the way so that you can learn from our experiences. That said, feel free to adjust our suggestions to better suit your vision for the event, and to improve upon what we suggest.

I. Overview

Below is an overview of themes to keep in mind as you plan your event:

- A. **Plan ahead.** At least one law school with which we worked plans-out 80% of its academic calendar (includes events like these panels) during the summer *before* the law school year begins. We realize that your FBA Law Student Chapter may not have its law school year leadership in place the summer before a school year starts. But if the planning can begin as early as the summer before, and your law school is receptive to it, the process of finding a suitable date for your panel may begin as early as the summer before.

- B. **Communicate.** Keep your colleagues, your law school, your FBA Professional Chapter contacts, and of course your moderator and panelists, all informed of what is expected of them and when. That communication is essential to managing a well-run event. Do your best to ensure that everyone is on the same page, since that helps to avoid surprise expectations and deadlines (which sometimes get forgotten or overlooked in any event). When practical, don't be afraid to schedule an in-person meeting to make a new connection and to get things done, particularly within your law school community and even in your outreach to the local FBA Professional Chapter leadership. To help keep the planning process on track, we recommend generating a written working memo to be used throughout the planning process to track deadlines, event details, speakers, and the like. (We discuss this suggestion in greater detail below, and provide a sample working memo at **Exhibit "A"**).

- C. **Delegate, and follow-up.** Be careful not to take on too much yourself. Don't be afraid to ask others for help, and after you do so, it is always a good idea to check-in to make sure that everyone remains on track. For example, your law school's career services or career placement department may be very willing to lend support, particularly with getting in touch with those in-the-know at your law school who can make things happen. By the same token, an early outreach to your local FBA Professional Chapter might gain their attention, support, and outreach early-on. They very well may have been through the planning of an event like this themselves, and will be happy to lend you the assistance that you may need as a law student learning the ropes. Also, bear in mind that as an FBA Law Student Chapter leader you will want to identify and offer leadership opportunities to others and to the generation of Chapter leaders behind you, so think about ways in which they may play a role and take-on responsibility. Be sure to privately and publicly thank and credit all who help you in this effort.

- D. **Expect the unexpected.** One thing that seasoned event planners will tell you is that something, somewhere, out of nowhere -- will go wrong. Planning ahead can avoid any pitfalls, but sometimes a bump in the road is inevitable. Don't sweat it. Take it in stride, find a solution, and bear in mind that more often than not, the vast majority of those in attendance will have no idea that the bump in the road even happened.
- E. **Have fun!** This probably goes without saying. From a service perspective, you will be doing your fellow students, and your greater legal community, a service to produce an informative program like this. Be proud of that! You will almost surely make friendships along the way, and you will tangentially benefit by the experience and by having your name and friends' names attached to a successful program.

II. The Preliminary Groundwork

- A. *Law School Administration Contacts.* Your first stop will be the appropriate representative(s) at your law school. Career placement or career services may be very interested in supporting an event like yours that promises to deliver information to your fellow student that they might not otherwise receive. They can help you know what meeting rooms at your law school are available when, and can provide you with other valuable insights to planning an event at your law school – such as the names and contact information of graduates of the law school who could serve as panelists / speakers. The first order of business will be to scope out a date and time at which you can be sure to have the room reservation, and you will want that date to be months in the future so that you give yourself time to ensure that all the other necessary arrangements have been made in advance of your event. Your law school contact may also be able to guide you in identifying and reaching out to panelist prospects through their contacts with the law school. They may also have a pretty good idea what vendors for lunch or other refreshments will or will not work for your law school.
- B. *Professional Chapter Contacts.* Once you have the event date and time in-hand, if you have a local FBA Professional Chapter, your next stop should be to reach out to the Professional Chapter President or other leaders. They may be able to financially support your event, such as contributing the funds for a lunch or evening reception, depending on when in the day your event occurs. The local Professional Chapter President, or other leaders within the Chapter, may also be your very best resource for locating suitable prospects for your panel, some of whom may be members of the local Professional Chapter themselves.

III. The Huddle

- A. *Get organized, and identify panel prospects.* Once you have your key, preliminary contacts in place, it may then be helpful to arrange for an on-line meeting among your Law Student Chapter Leaders, your law school contacts, and your Professional Chapter contacts (together, your planning committee). You should still be months out from your event date.

At the planning meeting, you will want to make sure that everyone is on the same page in terms of the event date, time, and location, and what you are trying to accomplish. Use the planning meeting as the time for everyone to brain-storm as to their in-house counsel contacts in your area. Make sure that one person is assigned to reach-out to each prospect, and ask that each report back to you (or to the whole planning committee) as soon as they know whether the prospect is willing to participate or not. That way, you can avoid uncomfortable situations in which prospects are getting confused by being asked from different directions.

- B. *Managing invitations to panelists.* Bear in mind that for an hour-long panel in which the audience hears meaningfully from each of the panelists, you probably will not want to exceed three or four panelists. You will also want to identify a moderator early in the process, who will manage the flow of the event and the participation of the panelists when it is actually in-progress. For that reason, you need to be careful to coordinate the invitations made to panel prospects, so that you hopefully can avoid overbooking your panel. If your planning meeting results in a good number of prospects, use the planning meeting time to prioritize the asks, and then make sure that everyone is on the same page in terms of staging the invitations, with you being the point person to keep track of the open invitations and the responses that you have received. If the initial rounds of asks do not fill your panel slots, then you will want to reach out to your contacts to ask for a few more prospects. Make sure that you give each of your contacts sufficient time to reach out and to hear back from prospects (one to three weeks, according to what they think they might need); by the same token, follow-up on any open invitations so that they do not linger too long, such that you get into a pinch in needing to ask additional prospects at the last minute.

Also, bear in mind that it is possible that a panelist who has agreed to participate, maybe have an unexpected work obligation that forces them to cancel at the last minute. Think about that contingency, and what you might do about it (if anything). Your participants on the planning call may have some ideas for you as well. As just one possibility, it may be that the university with which your law

school is affiliated may itself have a General Counsel's office, and attorneys within that office may be willing to participate in the first instance, or may be willing to fill-in on shorter notice if needed.

Don't let the year-end time-crunch bite you. Practically speaking, progress on your panel may come to a halt during the weeks between Thanksgiving and the New Year. Know that that quiet period is coming, don't get too frustrated by it, and plan accordingly so that you are not in a time-crunch on the other side of the New Year.

- C. *Working memo.* We found it helpful, in advance of your planning meeting, to create an on-line working memorandum for all of your planning committee to use for information relevant to your event. Also, that working memo is a great place to keep contact information for everyone involved in the planning process, and you can chart open items, deadlines, and progress in your planning along the way. Be sure to frequently provide your planning committee a link to the on-line memo so that they can access it when needed and assign one person to update the working memo after the meeting of your planning committee.

A sample working memo is attached for your consideration as Exhibit "A."

- D. *Milestones.* Use the planning meeting to rough-out the timeline of what need to be accomplished and when in advance of your event. Remain mindful of when deadlines are approaching, and what needs to be accomplished by what deadlines.

IV. Staying on Track

Make sure that you set your rough milestones in advance, and that you circle back to ensure that you are making progress and everyone is on track.

Below is a rough timetable that you might want to consider as you are setting your milestones for you and your Law Student Chapter leadership. Refer to your timetable periodically, or better yet, create calendar reminders for yourself and anyone else who welcomes them, to ensure that you are progressing as planned, and so as to flag any trouble areas far enough in advance to do something about it.

Time Before Event	Tasks to Accomplish
Four (or more?) Months Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish time, date, location and vision for your event. ➤ Identify necessary contacts within your law school community, and within the local FBA Professional Chapter.
Two-to-Three Months Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Host on-line planning meeting with your planning committee. ➤ Circulate agenda and working memo link to your planning committee, to help them to have an idea as to the road ahead. ➤ Begin and follow-up with process of reaching out to panelist prospects. ➤ Identify panel moderator. ➤ Identify designee to introduce panelists and moderator. ➤ Consider questions to be asked of panelists, working within your law student group to think of questions that will be interesting to your law student community. ➤ If you are going to offer lunch or refreshments during or after your panel, line-up the funding and make those plans now, and make sure that the plan is agreeable to your law school administration.
One Month Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make contact with each of the panelists and moderator, thanking them for their willingness to participate, and letting them know that you or your panel moderator will be in touch with additional details about the panel. Also, ask them for a short biography that will be read at the outset of the panel. You may need to gently follow-up to collect the bios. ➤ If you have it, this would be a great time to provide the panel with logistics information, such as whether lunch or refreshments will be made available for them as well, and if your law school will offer them free, designated parking, where specifically to park, the street addresses of the parking area (for GPS purposes) and of your law school (if different) your law school, and where specifically within your law school the event will take place. ➤ In coordination with your law school, begin distributing word of your event to your law school community, whether it be on a sign somewhere prominent within your law school, or through some social media platform(s). Are there other law schools in your area that you might want to invite as well? A sample promo sheet for an in-house counsel careers event is attached as Exhibit “B.” ➤ If you are to offer food and refreshments, double-check to make sure that plan is firmly in place.
Two Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Draft a rough run-of-show timetable, with what is planned to occur at specific times during your event, and who will be speaking when. Example “short form” and “long form” run-of-show timetables are included in the attached working memo. A sample, short form run-of-show and questions list for distribution to your Panelists is attached as Exhibit “C.” ➤ You and/or your moderator should reach out again to the

	<p>panelists, first making sure that you have collected a short biography from each of them, and to provide them a list of questions that the panel might be asked. If you are only going to ask specific questions, or plan to do so in a particular order (neither of which is absolutely necessary), let your panelists know that, too. Also, if you plan to have a Q&A session toward the end of your panel, let them know that. Welcome any other questions that they may have. It might also be helpful to provide the panelists a cell phone number to call should they encounter any trouble getting to or into the law school. A sample two-weeks-out e-mail to your moderator and panelists is attached as Exhibit “D.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If your local FBA Professional Chapter has pledged to financially support your event, you might want to reach out to ensure that the funding is in place. ➤ If anyone on your panel has a name or names the pronunciation of which is not readily apparent, make sure that your introductions designee reaches out to each of them to be 100% sure of the proper pronunciation.
One Week Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check to see if you have any unaddressed loose-ends. ➤ Perhaps line-up water or other refreshments for your panelists in case they need it? Microphones? Will the presentation be broadcast via Zoom and/or Microsoft Teams, and if so, have the IT arrangements been secured? Seating? ➤ Make arrangements for a team to greet the moderator and panelists at the door to your law school as they arrive, and to walk them to where the event will take place.
Day-of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Get there early, confer with your law school administration, and just make sure everything is on track (including any food delivery that you have ordered). Microphones? Seating? ➤ Touch base with any others with leading roles in the panel to make sure all is on track. ➤ Don’t forget to take a few photos of your event while it is in-progress, and do your best to make sure that you have a good photo of each person with a leading role in the panel
Within One Week Post-Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make sure that you reach out to everyone who helped you with the panel to thank them, especially your volunteer panelists, your law school contacts, your local FBA Professional Chapter leaders, and other law students who helped to make it possible. The more personal the thanks, the better. ➤ Share a photo to two with your panel, so that they have it as a memento, and can use it in connection with their own social media presence should they choose to do so.

V. Panel Day

Be sure that you, your Law Student Chapter members, and/or your law school administration greet the panelists, preferably at the door to the law school, and walk them to where they need to be. When it comes to these honored guests who are volunteering their time, make things just as easy as you can for them. If they have any reasonable special requests, do your best to ensure that those needs are met.

VI. Wrap-Up

Congratulations! You and your team did it! Make sure that you acknowledge and express your gratitude for the efforts of everyone who played a role in making the event happen. Do not overlook the efforts of your law school administration and staff who helped you along the way. And of course, be sure to express your FBA Law Student Chapter's gratitude toward your panelists and moderator, who followed-through with their commitments to you and who sacrificed time out of their work days to participate.

One more thing: a strong organization finds a way to pass institutional knowledge on to future leaders. Consider whether you might create some on-line document and information repository for your Law Student Chapter (*e.g.*, Google Drive, or perhaps your law school may suggest some other convenient on-line space associated with the law school). Make sure that the next generation of your Chapter leaders have access to it. You might include in that repository your own notes on what you learned along the way as a Law Student Chapter leader (including your work on an in-house counsel panel), and you can share that knowledge with future leaders of your Chapter so that they will not be starting from scratch.

VII. Questions?

One of the best things about being a part of the Federal Bar Association is that you are surrounded by friends willing to help. Please do not hesitate to reach out to either or both of us with any questions or comments that you may have. For any general questions about the FBA's Law Student Division, please contact sections@fedbar.org. We would also be more than happy to help you where we can, or to help find answers for you from someone else in-the-know.

Regardless whether we hear from you, please know that we will be there rooting for you from the sidelines and wishing you and your event all the best.

We realize that our FBA Law Student Chapter leaders like you are our Association's future. Thank you for your leadership and all of your efforts!

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Our thanks to the FBA for entrusting with us the pilot program that resulted in this guide. We are also grateful to the kind, resourceful people of New Orleans and Utah who made us feel so welcome from beginning to end. A hopefully-complete list, of the many generous people who helped to make the pilot panels possible, follows.

NEW ORLEANS:

Panel on Judiciary Clerkships:

Moderator: Peter Mansfield, U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana and Co-Chair of FBA N.O. Professional Chapter's CLE Committee

Panelists: U.S. District Judge Barry W. Ashe
U.S. Magistrate Judge Donna Phillips Currault
Jennifer Rogers, Esq. Career Law Clerk to Judge Kurt Engelhardt, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

Panel on In-House Counsel Careers:

Moderator: Kelly Titus Scalise - Shareholder - Liskow - New Orleans

Panelists: Douglas Currault - Senior Vice President & General Counsel, Freeport-McMoRann
Rebecca Dietz - Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel, New Orleans City Park
Wendi B. Loup - Assistant General Counsel, Lamar Advertising
Sharonda Williams - Loyola New Orleans General Counsel

Loyola University New Orleans College of Law:

Alexis Topel, Loyola FBA Law Student Chapter President
Diana Mercer, Director, Career Development Office

Tulane University School of Law:

Olivia Simkins, Tulane FBA Law Student Chapter President

Vanessa Beary, Career Counselor
Lex Kumar

Michael J Ecuyer, Esq., FBA New Orleans Chapter President

UTAH:

Panel on In-House Counsel Careers:

Moderators: Jennifer Kimball - BYU FBA Law Student Chapter President

Panelists: Rebecca Ryon, of eBay
Aida Neimarlija. of the Larry H. Miller Real Estate Group
Brian Watts - Deputy General Counsel at the University of Utah

University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law:

Liz Cook - Utah FBA Law Student Chapter President
Arturo A. Thompson, Assistant Dean of Career Development
Cynthia Lane, Assistant to Dean Thompson
Kristina Monty, Associate Director
Amanda Barr - Career Counselor

Brigham Young University J. Reuben Clark Law School:

Jennifer Kimball - BYU FBA Law Student Chapter President
Jessica Craig - BYU FBA Law Student Chapter
Glen Collyer - Director of Career Development Office

Jenifer L. Tomchak, Esq. - Tomchak Skolout – FBA Law Student Division Chair
Stewart Michael Young, Esq. - AUSA USDOJ - Utah FBA Professional Chapter President