



# NALP FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION

By Fiona Trevelyan Hornblower,  
Skip Horne, and Jennifer Mandery

In 1996, as NALP prepared to celebrate a quarter-century of leadership among law schools and legal employers, its Board of Directors embarked on an ambitious new project — establishing a non-profit foundation focused solely on research about and education for the legal profession. With the courage and foresight of a remarkable consortium of attorneys, law school professionals, academics, and association executives, the NALP Foundation was born. Now, as NALP celebrates its first 50 years, the NALP Foundation is proud to celebrate its first 25 years.

From the beginning NALP and the NALP Foundation have been closely tied in both mission and purpose, and yet each organization has had a unique identity, and operating and governance autonomy. Both organizations have made important and lasting contributions to the legal profession while remaining committed to cooperation, collaboration, open communication, good will, and mutual respect.

## THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FOUNDATION

Paula Patton became NALP's Executive Director in 1992 and quickly expanded NALP's scope of work, adding additional educational programs and research projects to the association's annual business plan. During her early outreach to NALP members, she discovered a desire for in-depth, long-term research projects that were difficult to pursue given NALP's rigorous ongoing annual research projects. In particular, she discovered a strong desire in the industry to learn more about the arc of lawyer's careers once they left law school. From this emerged an idea for a longitudinal study of lawyer careers over the first 10 years following the bar exam, the inspiration for what would eventually become the seminal *After the JD* study, and the kernel around which early organizing efforts for establishing the NALP Foundation were centered.

Patton presented the concept of committing to longer-term, in-depth research to the NALP Board of Directors, which approved hiring a consultant to explore various options. "From that, the idea of creating a separate non-profit foundation that would respond to the profession's needs came to light," Patton recalls. "The primary goal was to provide data on

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associate retention, the path to partnership, attorney training, diversity, and of course, much more in response to the profession's evolving needs.”

Incorporated in 1996, the NALP Foundation was established as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization nested initially within NALP itself, sharing office space and personnel, and began operations as a fully independent entity in 2002. Incorporation as a 501(c)(3) provided the NALP Foundation with the ability to seek grants and to solicit tax-deductible charitable contributions from organizations seeking to partner on research studies, fundraising options not available to NALP itself, which is organized as a 501(c)(6) tax-exempt trade association.

Within a few years of its inception, the NALP Foundation launched its first major collaborative research project, *After the JD: A National Survey of Legal Careers*. This landmark longitudinal study — a cooperative effort among a coalition of nonprofit entities, principally the NALP Foundation and the American Bar Foundation, and also including the Access Group (now the AccessLex Institute), the Law School Admission Council, NALP, the National

Conference of Bar Examiners, the National Science Foundation, and the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation — was one of the largest and most ambitious studies ever undertaken of the legal profession. It set out to follow a nationally representative cohort of bar exam takers from the year 2000 through the first decade of their careers.

The research team made up of senior researchers, social scientists, and legal scholars, and an executive coordinating committee consisting of representatives from the various funding organizations, ultimately completed a project that resulted in three written reports published by the NALP Foundation (*After the JD I, II and III*), along with scores of law review articles and other academic works in peer reviewed journals. The study, taking more than 15 years to complete, comprehensively examined the career trajectories of approximately 4,000 lawyers, surveying participants at three separate points — 2003, 2007, and 2012 — over the course of 12 years following their bar passage in 2000. This large-scale project established the NALP Foundation as a key source for reliable, data-driven, and affordable research for the profession.

## THE FOUNDATION TAKES FLIGHT

From the beginning, the NALP Board of Directors recognized the potential importance of the contributions the Foundation could make to the profession and provided the Foundation with financial support as well as in-kind services and support. Over the years, NALP has contributed more than \$2.2 million in funding to support the growth of the Foundation, and continues to provide an operational grant every year, though most of the Foundation's annual funding now comes from charitable donations made by law firms, law schools, and corporate legal departments.

In 2008, after 16 years with NALP and the NALP Foundation, Patton retired and Tammy Patterson, a long-time NALP member and former Director of Recruiting and Professional Development at Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP, took over the reins of the NALP Foundation as its second President & CEO. Under Patterson's leadership, the Foundation grew and evolved as the legal profession experienced various economic and environmental cycles and adapted to the changing marketplace, diversifying its research efforts to focus on a mix of signature research projects, including

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the *Keeping the Keepers* series as well as annual studies on associate attrition. A new joint research project with NALP was launched, the annual *Study of Law School Alumni Employment and Satisfaction*,

which surveys law graduates three years after commencement. On the education side, the Foundation continued hosting regular webinars and presenting at industry conferences and city group/law school consortia meetings, and began partnering with a wider array of outside organizations on timely research projects that were of interest to the legal profession, including studies on effective mentoring and the experiences of women in the profession.

In 2017, the Foundation launched its first Hiring Partner Conference, a popular, invitation-only event designed to bring together senior law firm leaders and decision-makers from a range of law firms to discuss current trends and developments in law firm



*Pam Malone (left) and Tammy Patterson share a conversation at the Latham & Watkins reception during the 2008 NALP Annual Education Conference.*

recruiting. Patterson reflected that the addition of the Hiring Partner Conference to the Foundation's curriculum helped it reach a new audience and spread the important work of both NALP and the NALP Foundation.

## 25 YEARS AND GROWING

The NALP Foundation today is led by its governing body, the Board of Trustees, with a second close group of advisors and supporters serving on its National Advisory Board. Throughout the Foundation's 25-year history, nearly 100 individuals (including many NALP members themselves) have served as Trustees or Advisory Board members, representing a wide variety of law firms, law schools, corporations, and legal associations. Howard Ellin, Partner with Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, currently serves as Foundation Chair and John Reich, Partner with Merchant & Gould PC, serves as Foundation Secretary/Treasurer. The Foundation's bylaws provide that the NALP Board of Directors fills three seats on the Foundation's Board

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The NALP Foundation's administrative staff has always been "small but mighty" according to Fiona Trevelyan Hornblower, who joined the Foundation as its third President & CEO in 2020. Hornblower previously served as Assistant Dean for Career Development and Public Service at Boston University School of Law, and prior to that as National Director of Legal Recruiting for Bingham McCutchen. Rounding out the current Foundation team is Jennifer Mandery, Senior Director of Research, who joined the Foundation in 2011 and brings over 20 years of research and analytical expertise in the legal industry. The newest member of the team, Skip Horne, joined the Foundation in 2020 as Vice President for Engagement. Horne, in addition to numerous roles with both leading law firms and law schools, served as NALP President in 2002-03, and in that role was the NALP signatory to the original memorandum of understanding

between the two organizations that laid out the commitment between them to work cooperatively toward mutually agreed upon goals.

Hornblower and Horne collectively bring more than 40 years of NALP member experience to their respective Foundation roles, which highlights the strong historic connection between the two organizations. The Foundation also benefits from Mandery's deep research background, now at the Foundation for nearly a decade and previously with Thompson Reuters. Over the years, a number of other NALP members have contributed their time and talent to the Foundation staff, including Pam Malone, Michelle Nash, and Jeremy Bloom.

The close relationship between NALP and the NALP Foundation continues, including ongoing collaboration on several joint research projects, including the annual Study of Law School Alumni Employment and Satisfaction and programming such as this past summer's COVID-19 Town Hall series.

Reflecting on the legacy of the NALP Foundation during its first 25 years, all three Presidents point to the *After the JD* study as setting the bar and establishing the

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reputation of the Foundation as an important source for reliable, accurate, and data-driven information for the legal profession. “I commend my predecessor, Paula Patton, for her forethought and hard work in getting this study off the ground,” said Patterson. “It is also important to thank the financial supporters and partners, including NALP, the NALP Foundation Board of Trustees, and most importantly, the research team who devoted over 13 years to this significant project. After the JD would not have been possible without the contributions of all these groups and leaders. It really was the project that launched the Foundation and all of the work that has followed.”

Looking ahead, Patton, Patterson, and Hornblower are all extremely optimistic about the future. “At this pivotal time, when the legal profession is evolving in ways and at speeds no-one would have previously contemplated, the Foundation has a critical role to play as a credible and cutting-edge source for research and programming on central issues,” reflected Hornblower. “With a firm foundation in the work of the past 25 years, the Foundation now looks to the next quarter-century, eager to expand and innovate to support the profession’s transformation.” 



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## Cheers to Celebrating NALP's 50 Years!



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