



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about the career aspects of transferring law schools. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about the career aspects of transferring law schools. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, it's that time of year when students are starting to think maybe about transferring, particularly if they did really well first semester. And one of the big considerations is always around this job question. The big question is always, "Is this really going to help me get a better job for my 2L summer and later on in my career?" What do you think about this in general?

Sadie Jones: I think, generally, it will. If you're thinking about transferring, I assume you're thinking about making a pretty big step up in terms of the school you're going to be transferring to. And I think that actually can make a pretty big difference, definitely, in your summer search. And that's going to lead to full-time employment down the road. So I think it can actually have a pretty big impact.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. This is the unfortunate part of the legal profession. It tends to be very, very hierarchical. So, I agree with you. I think generally, if you're upgrading to, as you said, a much more national, prestigious type of school, I think it's almost always going to help your job prospects. And not just around that first job, but even later. I always found it amazing how much people cared about where a possible lateral, who's going to switch to a different firm, had gone to school. It was like, "Who even cares at this point?" But people did care.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. And I think the alumni... There's other parts of it, but just reputation alone and ranking, which may be silly, but just is the way it is.

Alison Monahan: Exactly, and you deal with it. Alright, well, for our listeners who maybe are not really familiar with this yet, let's talk about the basics of the OCI process. We do have some podcasts on this, but let's just cover the basics. And how that might



work for people who do end up transferring to a new school, because that can get a little bit complicated.

Sadie Jones: It can, and it can be a little chaotic and a tight fit with the transfer process. So generally with OCI, you are going to bid on the employers that you want to interview with. And then depending on the school, employers may get a choice of students. The hiring schools, they don't get a choice of students; it's all just a random lottery. So, it's sort of where you rank the employers and how it fits into the slot. And then you get your interviews and you do it all during a week or two, generally at a hotel, and you are going through this speed dating process of interviewing with a lot of employers in a short amount of time. And that's really how many students find their 2L jobs. The issue for transfer students is that the transfer process is happening at the same time that the bidding process is happening – probably late spring. And you're probably finding out, making a decision about transferring as you're leading into almost OCI. So you're making this quick leap to, "Okay, now I go to the school, and I'm going to interview for places at this school."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's what I was going to say. The complicating factor is that these kind of overlap. So, I definitely knew of people who had signed up for OCI at their original school and were fully planning on going through that process, and then they got word that they were able to transfer, and within a matter of days, suddenly were bidding on firms at OCI at this new school. It worked out well for most people, but it was definitely kind of a chaotic process.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And so I think you need to be prepared for that going into it, but generally, doing OCI at the school you're transferring to, which most likely is a much higher-ranked school, is going to be better for you, give you more opportunity. Some people may be transferring from a school that doesn't really have much OCI, so they may not even be as familiar with the process. So, it's a good idea to educate yourself on what's going to be involved, so you can jump in and be ready.

Alison Monahan: Right. I talk to people definitely who said, "Firms that would not have looked at me a week ago at my old school are now welcoming me into these interviews with open arms. This is kind of crazy. I had no idea." So, I think you just want to be aware of the process, understand what the deadlines are, how that's going to work, basic logistics around bidding, where might you want to be bidding, that kind of thing. It might have already happened, so you need to figure out how you're going to slot into that. But the reality is, these top schools that do take a lot of transfer students, they have a process.

Sadie Jones: They definitely do. And as we've recommended in the past just for OCI, if you don't get a slot with the place you want, there's always a chance to write into them directly, even show up on the interview day and get in. Generally, that



reflects well on you that you care enough to make the effort. And I would say that if you're writing in, you should definitely explain that you are a transfer, you're late to the process. That's fine. Everyone understands that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think it's mostly a question of, you need to figure out where you're going to need to be, what you're going to need to be doing, how much lead time you have on all this. If you are going to think about transferring, you need to be ready to jump in if that happens for you.

Sadie Jones: Definitely.

Alison Monahan: Because this will happen all before classes actually start.

Sadie Jones: And something that I think comes up that not everyone understands is, you are only going to have your transcript from the school that you were transferring from. And the firms know that; there's no issue there. It's not like they expect you to have grades from the other school, or going to be confused or not know what it means. Also, if you've transferred to the new school, they're going to assume that you've done well enough to transfer, and that's fine.

Alison Monahan: Right. And my impression is firms actually love transfer students because it showed that you did really well and also that you have ambition.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. I mean, it is a process to transfer, and it takes a lot of effort on your part. So I think it is a positive. And I think firms know that you are going to start at this new school and you did that well at the other school. I think they sort of assume you're going to be able to hold your own at the new school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Alright, what if, say, a firm or an organization was interviewing at the first school but they're not at the new school – maybe more local options? Say you were in a more local market that you think you want to return to. I assume someone can still reach out to them, right? And just explain the situation.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. You definitely can. You should let them know that you're transferring to the new school, but you still want to interview with them, you're still interested. I'm sure they're going to be thrilled that you want to see them and that you did well enough at your first school. And I also think there are situations where transfers either go through OCI at the first school, or at least start the process. So I think it's not necessarily clear that you are supposed to do it one way or the other. So I think it's fine, as long as you're honest about that you're leaving and where you are, and just make it clear to them. I would imagine they would be interested in talking to you.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I don't really see why you would turn down the top student at your local school who's decided to transfer to Harvard. I mean, they're going to be like, "Great, you're still are considering us? Awesome."
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. So, I think you just need to be proactive.
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. Figure out what you want and ask for it. Well, do you think it matters later on that much in a legal career, say, if you're lateralizing? If someone transferred after first year, do firms look at that, where you started? Do they only look at the graduation school? What's most important down the road?
- Sadie Jones: I think it depends where you are down the road. I think that earlier on you may put that you transferred. I think if you're well into your legal career, they may only even see the school you graduated from. It's more if you're looking for summer or new jobs that you would have that. It definitely doesn't reflect poorly. Again, I think it can reflect well on you that you moved up, that you did that well at the first school to transfer. So, I think it's a positive for your career long term. And I just think that if you are moving up enough levels in the school, it is going to make an impact on your choices later on.
- Alison Monahan: Right, because later on that website, they're only going to have basically, "So-and-so graduated from this school." It's like, "Great, okay, I'm hiring this fancy lawyer. Amazing!" Yeah, I think generally speaking, it's going to give you some more options. That being said, are there any downsides to transferring from a job search point of view?
- Sadie Jones: I don't really know if there are downsides. I have seen situations where they are not transferring enough up the chain in schools that necessarily make sense to an employer. So I think there are situations where you sort of need to explain why you are transferring. Sometimes it is the location.
- Alison Monahan: Right, or more like personal, family reasons, that kind of thing.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. But be prepared for that, because I think that employers expect that if you're transferring, you're transferring from one tier of schools to another tier of schools. It's not just like, "Oh, I was moving up 10 rankings." Usually, it's a pretty significant difference. So that's a situation where I do think maybe you need to explain it, because it might just kind of raise a question of, "Why? Why did this happen?"
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I agree with that. I mean, there are a number of valid reasons to transfer, but I think most people do it largely to improve their positioning. Somebody said too if you want to transfer into a school in a market that you want to work in or something like that, and for whatever reason you weren't able or didn't apply to



or something the first time. But yeah, generally speaking, if there's not a big jump, people are at least going to be curious about that.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So I think I would just be prepared to talk about it, and there probably was a reason.

Alison Monahan: Right. Presumably you didn't do this just for fun.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. So, I think you just need to be able to explain it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think another thing that comes up – this isn't directly related to the job search, although it's indirectly related – is the money question. So, if you've got a great scholarship at your first school and you have the opportunity to upgrade but you may be paying full price or close to full price, I think that is something people definitely are considering, and want to be considering. Because if you do have significant student debt that's going to, in some ways, limit your options – say that you want to do public interest work or something – that being said, you've also got the possibility that this new school might have an LRAP program that can help you pay back your loans and that kind of thing. So, I think this is a question we get a lot and it's very personal, but it's definitely something to keep on your radar.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And I would say if you are in a situation where you just don't think financially that makes sense because you're getting a full ride at the first school, I think you can also explain that to employers later on. Let's say that you graduated first in your class. I think you could explain you had options to transfer, they offered you the scholarship. I think people understand that, too. It also depends, I think, on what the first school is. Is it just kind of the next tier down, or is it way, way down, where their employment rate is very low, their bar passage rate is very low? I think there are ranges in terms of where people are. But I also think you can explain that. I've seen that a lot. I didn't pay anything to go to the school, and I feel like I got a good education and did well.

Alison Monahan: Right. Yeah, I think one of the issues there is, you have to continue doing well. So, this is also another issue that comes up. Often times people worry, if they're thinking of transferring, they think that the competition is going to be higher at this new school, and maybe they're not going to do as well. But there's also a risk to staying where you are, right?

Sadie Jones: Definitely, especially if you're first or second in your class, I think there's a lot of pressure to stay there. And I think some of the lower-ranked schools are more competitive than the high... I can think of a few where I've heard that it's very cut-throat. And part of that is, people are trying to transfer after 1L year. I've seen that transfers generally do very well at the school that they transferred to, even if they were coming from a low-ranked school. If they did really well at the



first school, usually they have the right experience and I've noticed that their work ethic is usually very good. So I haven't really seen that problem, in terms of transfers that I've seen. And I think it is a really big worry for people, but I would say, keep doing what you were doing, that you did that well.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's absolutely right. I think people overestimate certainly the work ethic, and probably the brain power of the average student at a top-ranked school. Not to say people aren't smart and don't work hard, but if you are literally at the very, very top of your class at any law school in the country, you are going to be equally competitive and probably work harder because you are more paranoid than somebody who's just kind of middle to bottom of the class at a fancy school.

Sadie Jones: And the other thing to keep in mind is, most of the top schools barely have grades anymore.

Alison Monahan: Right. That's right.

Sadie Jones: So, I think some students don't even realize that when they're transferring, because they're immediately in this percentage, they know exactly where they fit in. And I would say to them, "You know that you won't have any way to measure that at the school year transferring to." Now, usually different schools do in different ways, in honors or a high honors or a middle of the road. But usually there's no way to distinguish where you are within this bucket of each third of the class. So, I think you'll probably find that easier as well.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's a great point. I mean, we were literally not allowed to calculate a GPA, there was no class rank. I have literally no idea where I graduated. It just wasn't something that you were even told. I'm sure somewhere the school had a list, but they wouldn't tell any... I think they gave a prize to literally the first, like the very top student, and everyone was kind of shocked, like, "Oh, I didn't know that person was top of the class." It was just one of those things you had no idea about.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And actually, that's probably something to also keep in mind just culturally, that if you're used to this sort of competitive or knowing you're ranking and you're going into a school that doesn't have that, you have to let that go.

Alison Monahan: Which I think can be a relief.

Sadie Jones: Yes. I would think so.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I know somebody who worked with us when I was a clerk, and she had transferred to Harvard, and she said one of the reason she did it was that she



didn't want to have to keep being that concerned about her grades for the next two years. Of course, there were tons of other opportunities which we'll get to in a second, but one of the key reasons was, "My grades will just be less important, and then I can focus on doing other things."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think that's the best attitude to go into the transfer.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Alright, let's switch gears a little bit. Let's talk about some other types of career-enhancing options that might be available to a transfer student that is not available at their current school. What can people expect, other than just having way more firms on campus interviewing?

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think there are other options to sort of enhance everything. So, clerkships are obviously competitive, and a lot of times are only from certain schools, or do really well at certain schools. And so, I think that's a good experience for you in terms of learning and growing in your writing, and also will open more opportunities later on for jobs. So, that's one example. Externship or internships – I think there are a lot more options at the top schools, and you will get help in terms of how to find these things. I think also career services. It varies. It varies in the top schools.

Alison Monahan: I'm going to say, "Hmm, I'm going to push back on that a little bit."

Sadie Jones: But I think that they do want to place you, and now all career services want to place you. But I think, yes, it does vary, but there are some that may offer...

Alison Monahan: Regardless of how good or poor you think your new career services office might be, at a minimum, I think you're totally right, that they just have options that may not exist at other places. So, you may have clinics at this new school that you would never have seen before. They just have more resources. And things like federal clerkships from a top school – that whole process is sort of laid out for you. People are not surprised if you ask for recommendations. There will be presentations about getting a clerkship. There will probably be presentations about becoming a legal academic. All these things, these doors that suddenly open up in ways that I think...

Sadie Jones: I also think alumni...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, for sure.

Sadie Jones: Your networking opportunities are huge. There are some schools where the alumni network is so important, and just who you can be reaching out to, who will talk to you.



- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. It's always if somebody comes and they say, "Hey, I graduated from your law school. I have a question about this" – I'm probably going to answer that question. I mean, I might answer that question if they just approach me. And typically, I do if they're like, "I'm a law student, and I have a question." But a lot of people will not do that because it's not their actual job.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. And if you're looking for a job at a place where if you look at where the lawyers went to school, and it was all these top schools, then you are more likely to have something in common with them that you can reach out to them about.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, the reality is there's certain types of jobs that are easier to get if you went to a top school. Do you want to top federal clerkship? Top school. Do you want a BigLaw job? Top school. Do you want to be in some very well-known public interest organization? Even that, actually often requires a top school, which people are surprised about.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, even the public defender, the DA's office, even jobs that are not paying that well can be really competitive.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So, if you're listening to this in your thinking, "Well, I'm not interested in BigLaw, maybe I should just stay where I am" – totally legitimate choice, but you should also look at these other opportunities and also opportunities for funding. So yeah, if you're thinking about, can you get funding either for the summer or after school or something like that – a lot of these top schools either do funding, and/or they do loan repayment. So, in some ways, it still can make sense to you, even if you are not interested in these kinds of classically large school, big fancy jobs.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely. I just think the options are more open. And I don't think that these doors are closed to you if you go to a lower rank school. You see people that do really well even at these fancy jobs who went to a lower rank school.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, absolutely.
- Sadie Jones: But it's just going to be much harder.
- Alison Monahan: Well, the reality is actually, once you get the job, once you get a BigLaw job, people at less prestigious schools are actually more likely to stick around and make partner, which is interesting. So maybe the transfer student would actually be the best of both worlds, because they would have the drive from doing really well at a lower ranked school, but then they have the doors opening from these higher ranked transfer schools, too.



- Sadie Jones: That's really been my experience. They have usually been the super stars of the class.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Sadie Jones: And so, I've actually seen where firms are specifically looking for transfer students. That's another thing.
- Alison Monahan: I think they love it. Yeah.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, it's definitely a positive, and you see it more and more. I think it used to be less common.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and then there are also certain schools where they're just pathways in certain areas. If you're at a lower ranked school in New York, there are certain schools you transfer to. If you're at a lower ranked school in the Bay Area, there are certain schools you'd typically apply to transfer to. People know that this happens.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely. And actually, something to keep in mind just about the decision and situation like that is, if you know that you are definitely going to work in that market and you're kind of at a school that's more regional, but is okay regionally and people are recruiting from that school regionally, then I think there are situations where it may make sense to stay and be the top student there, because you'll have the exact same opportunities. The issue is if you're not sure if you want to stay there, it may be a lot harder to get into a different market.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, let's talk about that, because I know sometimes people do want to upgrade their school for geographic portability. If you're not really tied to a certain area where your current law school is, I think there is a strong argument for if you can upgrade to a more national school. How do you think people should think about this?
- Sadie Jones: It is hard to know where life is taking you. So, you may be sure that you are going to stay and then your spouse, it turns out, is a professor, and so you're going to have to just live wherever. So, there are situations where you just don't know where you're going to end up, so I will say that the more national schools are going to give you, again, the most options and the most flexibility. But I do think if you are completely sure that you want to be in that market and they're paying for school, and you know you're going to stay, and you're at the top of your class, then I can understand making the decision that it's not worth it to transfer. But I think if you're not really sure where your life's going to end up, it does give you more options to be at a national school.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's right. And again, like you said, it kind of depends where you're starting. Sometimes I talk to people who are at schools that are in California, unfortunately may be on the verge of closing, and they're considering staying there and it's just like, "Well, I think you need to look at this long term." What happens if this school gets de-accredited, which is completely possible in this current environment, if they don't get their bar passage rates up? There have been schools recently that have been de-accredited in California. That's a tough call, but I think there are definitely some reasons where you might just want to jump ship and get out.
- Sadie Jones: And if you think about it, it's always going to be on your resume. You're always going to have gone to that school, so I think that is something to keep in mind, like long-term career.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Do you want to be explaining, "Well, actually, when I graduated, they were still accredited, they hadn't shut down yet." It's like, hmm, I don't know, I probably would consider that very carefully.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, if they're Googling your school and it doesn't exist, that could be concerning. There are things that happen that you wouldn't expect, but I think you can tell if the school is on the verge of that, or even has had those issues in the past. So I think it's all things to keep in mind, but I will say that these better national ranked schools are just going to be more solid, going to give you more options and flexibility later on. And the money question is an individual question, about what you want for your life and what you can do. So, I wouldn't tell anyone, "I think you should go into debt." That's a decision that you have to make. But I do think of you if you kind of weigh the financials, even if you, let's say, do BigLaw for a few years and pay it back, it might really be worth it. So, if money is the issue, I would do the math on those kinds of things.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think people shouldn't necessarily assume they're not going to get any funding at a school they transfer to. People sometimes think, "Oh, I'll definitely have to be paying full price." And that's actually not even the case in a lot of places.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, I think that's definitely true. And that's a situation where make sure that you check out all your options and don't just assume.
- Alison Monahan: Right, yeah, it's definitely where you want to be following up with financial aid and making sure you've got everything in on time, whatever they're asking for. Because sometimes people wonder if they should go early decision on transferring and all these things. That often times comes down to, how important is the money to you? Do you want to have any negotiating leverage or not? So, this is all complicated stuff, but I think we are kind of coming down



on the side of it's probably going to help you in your first job search, and probably later. Do you think that's right?

Sadie Jones: I think that's definitely right, with the caveat that, again, it has to be a pretty big step up. And I'm assuming that that's what we're talking about with most people. So that's the only thing I would say to keep in mind. I know in California there are a lot of students at Davis that do really well and have a lot of options looking to transfer. And I don't always think it makes sense to transfer from a Davis to a Berkeley, because I do think you get lots of options being at Davis. So again, I am saying that it should be a pretty big bump.

Alison Monahan: Well, and I think too, there are certain even top schools where their job numbers are not that amazingly impressive. So, you also actually want to dive into that. There's some where it's just like, "Oh, do you want a BigLaw job that's pretty much almost guaranteed?", but that's not the case even at some very top schools. So I think just go in with a little bit of... I don't want to say weariness, or cynicism, but examine the options for real. Don't just listen to like, "Oh well, if I upgrade it's going to all be easy." It's like, "Well, it might still not be that easy." So, you want to make sure you're getting your money's worth if you're going to pay for those.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And I would, like you said, look at all the numbers, look at all the details, because I think some people just hear a name and think, "Oh, I know that school, it's seems really prestigious." It doesn't necessarily mean it's the right school to transfer to.

Alison Monahan: Right. If they talk to you or talk to me we can sort of say, "Well, actually if you look at this particular school, if you're looking at these three options, this one has much stronger job placement numbers in the market you're looking at, versus this other one that maybe doesn't." So, that's actually something we can help you with. Alright, any final thoughts on this?

Sadie Jones: My final thought is that I think that students worry there's some kind of stigma with being a transfer student, and I think it's the opposite, it's a positive.

Alison Monahan: I agree.

Sadie Jones: If that makes anyone feel better about it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I agree completely. I just can't imagine why anyone would ever look down on you for transferring. You did really, really well and you had an opportunity and you took it. Everybody's going to get behind that.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. And you were a hard worker. It actually shows more.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Alright, with that, unfortunately we are out of time. Thanks so much for joining us.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: Our pleasure. For more career help and the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, you can check out [CareerDicta.com](https://www.careerdicta.com). We will even help you with your transfer applications and help you figure out if this makes sense. So, if you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at [lee@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:lee@lawschooltoolbox.com) or [alison@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:alison@lawschooltoolbox.com). Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

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[Podcast Episode 140: OCI Strategy \(w/Sadie Jones\)](#)

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