



Alison Monahan: 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 prospect of OCI moving to the winter of 2021, rather than being held as it typically is, in the summer of 2020. Your Law School Toolbox host is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. 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 with us to talk about the prospect of OCI moving to the winter of 2021, rather than being held as normal, in the summer of 2020. So welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, some things have happened since the last time we spoke, which I think was maybe a week or so ago. Just for the record, we are talking today on April 8th. A number of schools, including most, if not all, of the Tier 14, T14... I don't know, what is the T for? I don't know. Have announced that they're planning to move OCI, which for those who are not aware, is on-campus interviewing, which is mostly where the BigLaw hiring takes place for summer associate positions. They're moving this to the winter of 2021 for jobs that would be starting that summer. And just to be clear, this is what would normally happen in the summer of 2020. So, that was a lot of words, but what does this all mean?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think that the immediate reaction might be anxiety or being nervous that things are changing. What does this mean? And I think the key is to stop and sit back for a minute and think about what this actually means for you. And I think that the most important aspect is that you're going to have an additional semester of grades to show the employers, and I think that's going to be a positive for a lot of students, and I think that's something that's really important to think about.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think this particularly comes into play. One of the reasons they're moving this is, people are kind of freaking out about, "My school is going to pass/fail" or, "There's optional pass/fail. What does this all mean? Are firms not going to hire me because I've only got one semester of grades?" Hey, now



you're going to have at least two, because you're going to get your fall semester grades.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. And I think the thing also to keep in mind is that it sounds like almost every law school is switching to pass/fail or giving you the option to go to pass/fail. So, it's sort of a level playing field. I think if people are really worried about how it looks to firms, you're going to look the exact same way as everybody else, so I wouldn't give that too much thought. The key is to be on the pass side of that.

Alison Monahan: Right. Definitely.

Sadie Jones: And I think some people are just automatically upset that they're not going to have a chance to do better. And the most important thing is that you at least pass, which can be a challenge. Things are a little crazy right now. So that's important. But if you didn't do great going into law school and you wanted a chance to show that you've improved, and you've figured things out, and maybe you've gotten extra help, and you have a better handle on it – you're going to have now the pass/fail in the spring, and then you're also going to have fall semester grades. And I actually think even if you'd had grades in the spring, it's better to have more to show them, especially because generally, law students do better as the semester goes on or their schooling goes on, because they sort of get more of a hang of it. And so, I think all of that is going to be important to show employers. You're also going to get a chance to pick new classes in the fall. So you have some control over that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, let's talk about that a little bit, because I was wondering your opinion on whether you think people should just take easy classes that they're pretty sure they can do well in, or do you think firms are going to look at, "Okay, you took this silly class and this other silly class because you thought you could get an A in it."? And that they're really going to be paying a little more attention to what classes people are taking.

Sadie Jones: I think generally that's always a concern, and I think it's a mistake to pick an entire schedule based off that. And I actually think it backfires a lot because you don't even know. There are classes you think are going to be easy or you've heard are going to be easy, and you don't do well. So, I don't think that that's the best strategy. I do think you need your core classes, you need to think about all the things that we talk about in terms of making your schedule. I also think that maybe there is something where you give yourself a little bit of a break if you think that it'll help. But I don't think you should make a whole schedule like that because I do think that'll stand out and you really are not guaranteed that it's going to be easy.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think typically you want to balance your course load, so maybe you take one or two classes that are on the more difficult, typically, side of the spectrum, and then you balance that with some, maybe there's a paper class, versus all-exam classes, that type of thing. I guess the other thing people needed to keep in mind about this semester is, if you're on a law journal, this can be very busy. So you've also got to factor that in if you think that you're going to be on Law Review or another journal and you're going to be taking a role that's going to take a lot of your time. This is probably not the semester to take five really, really hard classes. But you don't, also as you said, want to totally dial it in, because I think people will notice that.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Like you said, I think it's really about balance here. When it's a firm noticing something, I would say it's more they're noticing a bunch of electives that don't really sound like real classes. And there are a lot of, just in name, hard to know what you're really learning, what it's about. And if you have a bunch of those, that definitely stands out. That's something that particularly partners are going to notice.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think you want to take at least one or two core classes. Maybe then you take a seminar that sounds interesting. And maybe there's not a curve, because it's smaller, those kinds of things. But I don't think they're going to be scrutinizing it with a fine-tooth comb. You just don't want to have it jump out as like, "Huh, what is this person doing?"
- Sadie Jones: Definitely. And I think it's actually a chance to maybe, now that you've had more school, you've thought more about a specific area you're interested in. So it's a chance to maybe take a course in something you're particularly interested in, or you think you're going to be applying for jobs in this practice area, things like that. So it could be an opportunity that way.
- Alison Monahan: I absolutely agree. If you think that you're going to go into interviews saying you want to do corporate work, maybe you should take Corporations, so that you can actually point to that.
- Sadie Jones: That is such a good point. Particularly in corporate, they really look for things like that because it shows your interest and that you're not just saying it.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and you can't take a lot of these upper-level electives until you've taken these first-level classes. I think that's also another thing to keep in mind, is if there are these kind of foundational courses that you need to take before you can take more advanced stuff that might relate to your job, you probably want to be taking one of those so you can at least point to it and say, "Oh yeah, I'm in Corporations now. It's super interesting, we're talking about..." whatever, just so you have that. Or I guess you wouldn't be taking it then, you would already have taken it and hopefully done well in it.



Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright, so I think you're saying this is not necessarily a disaster. People should look at it as an opportunity, but the reality is also their jobs are going to be uncertain for longer than people expected. So, how do you think this is going to impact either people who maybe are on the cusp for a BigLaw job, they're not sure they're going to get one, or other interviewing? What are your thoughts on that?

Sadie Jones: So, it is going to be a tighter timeframe. I also think, most likely, these firms are going to hire fewer people. I think that's just realistic. So, I would keep that in mind. But I also think it's an opportunity to have more time to network and to do your research and to get the lay of the land, and also to see how firms are handling this situation. I've seen a lot online recently about layoffs and salary reductions. And it could give you an idea of how their business is doing, what practice areas they're in, also what their debt is like, things like that. It gives you time for all of that. I also just think it gives you more time to kind of figure out what you want to do and plan, which you don't really have when everything's super tight because you go from your summer job right to interviewing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I know it's a super compressed timeline normally. And like we talked about on the [other podcast that we did about jobs a few weeks ago](#), people sort of think whatever was happening is how it's always been, but that's not really the case. They used to do hiring later in the fall semester, and then it all got pushed back to the summer. So a lot of this stuff is always kind of shifting. This is not the first time this has shifted. But let's talk a little bit more about the timeline. So we don't know exactly what the timeline is, but I think you're right, that it's going to be tighter. Do you see changes coming from now? Do you see changes coming from the firms in terms of timeframe? What are your thoughts around this?

Sadie Jones: So, my understanding from [NALP](#) right now is that they've sort of taken an approach of stepping back a little and making it clear that they don't police when OCI is going to be. It's really up to the schools. So usually a prominent school will make the decision and then everyone will sort of follow suit, and then firms will agree to do it. It kind of just happens. NALP is in charge of at least having guidelines for how long you have to make offers, accept offers. So a lot of guidance around there. Again, it's not really binding and it's not really policed. It's sort of something that everyone agrees to if they're going through this process. And NALP has changed guidelines in the last 10 years or 15 years, especially through the downturn, so they're always evolving, in terms of what the offer process is. I do think, in this situation, it would probably make sense to have students have a smaller amount of time to decide about their offers, and that's continually gotten smaller throughout the years. And that seems fair



because you don't want to be holding a lot of offers open, you're potentially taking an offer away from another student, and it can kind of mess up the process. So I would imagine that that's most likely coming, but it hasn't been announced yet. I think they're kind of waiting to see what's going to happen.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think some of this depends on how quickly schools can get grades out and things like that. Often times, those grades linger into mid-January, it's pretty common. So it's a question, too, of when are these going to be able to be scheduled and how many OCI things can a firm do in a period of time? If everybody wants to do it the last week of January and the first week of February, how is that going to work? We don't know the answer to any of this. But I do think people are probably going to need to be prepared, as you said, to respond more quickly. And the other thing, I think, is a lot of people are going to need a backup plan and some alternative ideas ready because, as you said, I think it's likely that firms are going to be hiring fewer people given the economic conditions. You've got to be ready to go if you don't get a positive response from these later OCI interviews, and look at other options that normally you would have had a lot more time to explore. So, even if you're listening to this now, I think you can start thinking about, "Okay, if this didn't work out for me, what other opportunities would I pursue?" And figure out when those interviews might be happening or when you might be able to apply, just so you're ready to go.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely, and I think some of the students who would be guaranteed offers may end up in a different situation, or they expect that they're going to be at a top 30 firm and they're going to have to look at more mid-sized firms. I also think that students may need to consider taking a summer job that isn't really going to guarantee them full-time employment, because those may be fewer and far between. So I would probably think about, "What job could lead me to something down the road? But it may not be a set job offer after I graduate." And I think a lot of people are going to be in that boat, so it won't be maybe as concerning as it would have been had this not happened. Let's say you sort of thought you were on this path – I think you're going to have to sort of consider alternatives.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think, again, flexibility, like we talked about before, is so key here. It's like, okay, take the time and be upset, but you also have to be flexible and look at alternatives that present themselves. I also think it's not out of the question that you might see some 3L hiring the year after, if the economy does quickly turn around and firms realize, "Okay, we under-hired before." I think that's not out of the question.

Sadie Jones: I think that's a definite possibility. And I think down the road there may be more opportunities as the economy improves, however long that takes, for entry level opportunities you might not have had if you hadn't had that perfect summer job



before. So, I think things will be sort of ever-changing. My advice would be, put yourself in the best situation that you can in terms of planning, and in terms of doing the best you can in school to make yourself the best candidate that you can be, given the circumstances.

Alison Monahan: Well, and I also think it's a real argument for realistic bidding. To the extent that you are able to choose which firms you want to talk to, this is definitely a time probably to have more of your target and safety firms on that list, than your extreme-reach firms, because I think that is setting yourself up really just for a disaster.

Sadie Jones: I completely agree. And I also think that if you do get a job offer, I would not be waiting around for some other firm that you were more interested in. I think that may still happen, that some students just sort of have that mindset. And so, I think it's a situation where you take the one that you get as quick as you get it. Not in every case, but I think a lot of the time, you should be happy with having anything right now.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think you should bid on places that you would be happy to accept an offer from. Obviously, everyone's situation is different, but I agree that people should think very seriously about accepting an offer when it arrives on the table, just because it's a very uncertain time. And really, having any of these positions is great, so I think just don't worry too much about the exact details.

Sadie Jones: I also think it's a situation where we are in the world right now, where let's try to work together. You are then opening up another spot for somebody else if you accept quickly at one firm, and that offers opportunities to other people. I think it is a time to kind of try to think about that as well; not just what works for you.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think it's totally fair to send an email to a firm that you're very interested in, saying, "Hey, I have this other offer, I'd really like to be able to hear from you by the end of the week or whatever. If not, I'm going to accept this."

Sadie Jones: Absolutely, that is always fine.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, but much beyond that, I feel like don't really get into that right now.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So I think it's just something to keep in mind as things kind of move along.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, be grateful. Alright. Like I talked about earlier briefly, this is not really a brand new idea. Interviews haven't always been early in the summer, right?



- Sadie Jones: They haven't been. They were generally late August, September, and even October. Which sounds probably crazy to people right now, as they've been moved up to even July sometimes, and kind of overlapping with your summer job. And really, all those changes happened because of what we talked about in 2008. And really, it was sort of just a coincidence of timing that the economy crashed right at the time that OCI was happening. If it had been another time of year, it might have been different. But because that happened, I think people got really worried about making sure that their students had jobs, and so they wanted to lock it down as early as possible and not end up in that situation again. But I would say that for employers, and I think for students as well, it hasn't really been received that well. It's so condensed, it's all at the same time, it's hard for employers to find interviewers in the summer. A lot of people are on vacation. And again, when it's overlapping with your summer job that you're already in, it can be really difficult to find the time to prepare and all of that. So really, this is actually sort of a newer thing that it got moved up so early and that they're all exactly on top of each other.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And in some cases, I guess, firms are still having their last week or two of their own summer associate programs while they're trying to do interviews, which obviously, manpower is a problem. And you see the same sort of problems in the clerkship process where it just keeps moving back and forth because there's really no perfect answer. People have even talked about doing winter OCI for a long time, and part of it was to get this extra semester of grades and just have people have a little bit more of an idea of what they were actually interested in doing. You had the opportunity to take a few electives and see how they go. Maybe you've had some hands-on clinic work or something like that. I think, particularly for employers, I don't think this is really a downside.
- Sadie Jones: No. I've heard about this for a long time and I think there was never really a huge push to do it, just because I think in the legal market, things just tend to stay the way they are, unless something major happens, because no one wants to deal with it. This seems to be what happens – something major happens and then everything changes. So, I kind of see it as a positive. I also think that hiring people closer to the time of your program gives employers a better opportunity to hire the right number of people. And that's actually better for students as well. Even if it's a smaller class, it's a lot better for them to really see what their needs are, make sure that when you work there, you're going to be busy and you're going to make your hours, and have enough to do, and gain those skills, rather than over-hire because you had to do it two years in advance. So, I actually think that is another positive for everybody.
- Alison Monahan: Right. It just makes it more likely that the people that they do end up hiring, even if that's a smaller number, are more likely to get an offer, assuming that they do relatively well, versus a situation where they've massively over-hired



and now they literally can only give offers to half of the class or something like that.

Sadie Jones: Exactly, because that is a much worse situation. Or having to do layoffs later on. It's just better to really plan smartly in these situations on all sides. So, I see the winter OCI to have a lot of advantages.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think you're absolutely right, that people really should do their research before they bid because there is a lot of stuff coming out now about certain firms who are suddenly struggling and maybe they're cutting partner compensation or having layoffs. Also, look at did they have their summer program for the upcoming summer? Was it cut short? Did they do it at all? These are all the signals, as we talked about in the other podcast, about how the firm is likely to treat you if you start working there as well. And obviously, we can't predict the future, but we can kind of look to the past to see how they behaved when these things happen, or were they in serious financial trouble that no one knew about?

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. Also, I think that all firms are probably going to have to make some difficult decisions right now. And some may weather this better than others, but what difficult decisions are they making? Is it immediately just the partners that are taking the pay cut and not getting their pay out this quarter, whatever it is? Or are they making staff cuts, are they... What exactly are they doing? I think most firms are probably going to have to do something, but I would definitely look at how they're treating their people.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. If everyone has to make similar cuts, how do they make those cuts and who takes the brunt of the hit? I think it's a very valid question to be asking yourself and to be looking at. Again, go to [Above the Law](#), they're reporting on a lot of this stuff.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, absolutely, I would do that.

Alison Monahan: Alright, well, let's talk a bit about bottom lines before we wrap up here. I think one of the really key things here is to pay really careful attention to the communication from your school around all of these sorts of topics, because you want to be sure that you know what's happening, right?

Sadie Jones: Definitely. And if you're able to be in touch with your career services, I would also do that. I'm sure there's a way to talk to them from wherever you are, so they know that you're on top of it, you want to know what's going on. I also think things are going to be changing a lot, so you need to read all of the communications, because they may be really different day-to-day.



- Alison Monahan: Exactly. They may say at one point, "Oh, we're keeping it as normal", and then a week later, all of the top schools have shifted. Well, obviously, your school is probably going to shift too and they have to re-evaluate. So maybe even have a special folder or something that you should put all this stuff in if you need to reference it, but you definitely want to pay attention. What are the deadlines? How is this going to work? What do I need to know? All of these kinds of things. I think you also want to, like I mentioned, have a Plan B if OCI doesn't work out; and I think in some cases even consider, "Really, does it make sense for me to do this? Would it make sense for me to focus my efforts maybe on finding a different job before the OCI process happens", because maybe you have a better shot, right?
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I don't think that anything's set in stone; what you pick for your 2L summer is not what you need to do forever. I think it's a time to sort of adjust and think about what makes sense, and not just do something because that's what you thought you were going to do, or that's what seemed for sure. Because I think we know now that the world can drastically change very quickly.
- Alison Monahan: That is very true. If we learned nothing else, I think we have learned things can change really fast. Yeah, and I'm just thinking people may end up having to make some difficult decisions about, do you apply to a different job that has a deadline that's before your school's new OCI process? That may be a choice you end up making. Maybe you can do both, but these are the questions you're going to have to ask yourself. And in some ways, I think it could actually be good, because again, anything that gets people really thinking about, "What do I want? What is my long-term plan?", versus just sort of jumping on this "Well, everyone's doing OCI, so I guess I'll do it" bandwagon – I think it could end up working out well for a lot of people.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely. And I think even if the interview process and the offer process may be really condensed, you are going to have more time between now and then to consider these things and think about, and make a more organized plan. So take advantage of that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. This might be a good summer to read a career book or get some career coaching, just so you can drill down on, "What am I really looking for?" Because there are a lot of studies showing that people who go straight into these BigLaw jobs are not necessarily the happiest attorneys in the end, so I think that's something to take seriously. Another bottom line I think we talked about – take classes that you can do well in, and then do well in them. But don't totally pack your schedule with Law and Gymnasium or whatever.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, I think you need to find some balance.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I think people are going to be looking to see, are you taking a serious load of classes? But you don't need to also kill yourself trying to impress them, like, "I'm going to take Fed Courts and advanced whatever, and advanced that and this, and all of these to show that I'm such an amazing student." That is unlikely to end well. Take a couple of harder classes, take a couple of easier classes, and then maybe add an elective. I think that'll be fine.
- Sadie Jones: I think that's perfect. And employers aren't used to seeing the classes from the following year, so it will be new to them too, to look and see what you picked, but they are going to notice.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and they may have questions about, "What is this class about?" So I think just be prepared, and be able to sort of explain why you've made the choices that you've made.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely.
- Alison Monahan: And you will probably be fine. Alright, well, any final thoughts on this question before we wrap up?
- Sadie Jones: I just want to remind everybody that, like I said at the beginning, I think this can feel sort of shocking and scary, that everything is changing so quickly. I thought that too when I first heard it, and then when I took a second, and took a breath, I realized that this really could be an opportunity. And I think it could change things moving forward for the better in a lot of ways. And so, I would try to take that approach to it, rather than kind of be intimidated by it or feel too worried that it's just different. Just because it's different, doesn't mean it's worse.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And also, there's not really much you can do about it, so you're just going to have to roll with it.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, that's true.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, well, with that, we are out of time. Thank you so much for joining us.
- Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.
- Alison Monahan: My pleasure. For more career help and the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, including navigating the new OCI, you can check out [CareerDicta.com](https://www.careerdicta.com). 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 or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you



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