



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to be talking with Tiffany Lo, one of our writers who transferred law schools and is going to share some of that experience with you. 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 that 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 be talking with Tiffany Lo, one of our writers who transferred law schools and is going to share some about that experience. So welcome, Tiffany.

Tiffany Lo: Thank you so much for having me.

Alison Monahan: Oh, it's really my pleasure. Well, first off, can you just give our listeners a quick overview of your background and how you ended up where you are now?

Tiffany Lo: Definitely. So, I grew up in Hong Kong and went to school there and all that for 14 years and moved to the Bay Area for high school, and also did college in the Bay Area. And in terms of my interest in the law, I can't pinpoint a defining moment when I realized I wanted to be a lawyer, but it was kind of an accumulation of different experiences through speaking debate, mock trial, also the civics competition that we did in high school. And those experiences really piqued my interest in the law and I wanted to learn more about what a lawyer does and the impact they can make in the world. So in college, I was much more intentional about seeking out those experiences. I was in a pre-law fraternity where I heard different guest speakers and was able to share thoughts with students with similar and different inclinations about the law. I was also a student advocate in our student government and worked as an intern in the courthouse where I was helping self-represented litigants with family and civil law paperwork. So, all those things really confirmed my interest in becoming a legal advocate. I could see how my abilities, and especially because I speak both Cantonese and Mandarin from living in Hong Kong – those things really helped with people to access the legal system. So, those things pretty much solidified my desire to go to law school.

I decided to take a year off before I did that, but then during the year off, I worked a little, traveled a little, and then also put my time into law school applications and was lucky enough to be accepted at NYU, which is where I spent my first year of law school, had a wonderful experience there. And



especially as a city girl, I really loved being in New York City and being able to go to different firms for receptions, have those attorneys come and speak to us. There were so many opportunities in the city to help out with different projects in different legal areas. So, my 1L year was wonderful. And I'll get to this a little bit later as well in our conversation, but after my first year, I felt like I was in a great position to potentially transfer law schools and threw in my apps and now I'm a second year law student at Stanford Law School. So, that's how I got to where I am now.

Alison Monahan: Interesting. Alright. Yeah, it's sort of funny because people think no one transfers between these kinds of top schools. But my law school roommate at Columbia actually transferred to Harvard and we were kind of like, "Oh, okay."

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, it happens.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. It's sort of the less classic choice, I think, but that is very interesting. And when you started law school, were you thinking about transferring or is that something that kind of came later?

Tiffany Lo: The short answer is, a little bit. The schools that I ended up applying to transfer were schools that I was waitlisted at, so I kind of wanted a second chance to see if they would take me, because obviously those were great schools and I really loved certain aspects about the courses or the professors there. So, in the back of my head, I was thinking if I did well in my first year enough to be a strong transfer candidate, I would put my hat in the ring. But NYU is a great law school, so I would have been more than satisfied to have graduated there, and like I said, I had a really great 1L experience, so it was a matter of when it came to transferring just comparing smaller things like class size and course offerings and clinical offerings. But yeah, it grew as I realized that my grades were going to put me in a competitive position. So in my second semester, I started being more intentional about thinking about what I could put in my essay to explain why I want to transfer, and also to seek out professors to provide recommendations. And especially with everything going virtual in the middle of the spring, it kind of thwarted some of those plans. So starting early gave me an ability to not panic when those things came about, and really craft a strong application.

Alison Monahan: Right. No, definitely, I think that threw a lot of people off. Actually, this would be great. Can you just talk to people a little bit about the nuts and bolts of the transfer process when you mentioned kind of starting even in your second semester? When do people start? How does it work? What do you have to do? What do you have to submit? How does all this go down?

Tiffany Lo: So, the transfer process compared to the regular law school application process is much more straightforward and short in terms of the timeline. Of course, you



can start preparing a bit in advance, but the official process, if that word is even appropriate, starts around April, May. I would say May 1st is when most schools open up their applications. And the deadline, I believe for most schools, are between mid-June and July. So it's really a one to two-month window in which you can submit your application, and then after that, most schools say they will begin review immediately and calls come in July, maybe early August. This is all based on my experience and I didn't apply to many schools, so it might be different, but I think that's the rough timeline for most transfer applicants. Before that, I think a lot of people give advice that talks about if you are serious about transferring, you should start thinking about your application materials some months in advance. Generically, the materials required would be essays, usually just a personal statement. I believe, yes, I submitted personal statements unique to each school, transcripts from my first year, my updated resume. If you have an anticipated summer job, it would be great to put that on there as well, to show the school what you're up to, and also what your interests are. And then recommendations from professors and employers. Most schools recommend that you have at least two professors from your 1L year write about what they think you are strong at and why you would be a good transfer candidate. So, you would be assembling those materials in those months, and then also some schools provide information sessions in which you log on to a WebEx or a Zoom session, and they give a little presentation and you can ask questions. And this is especially helpful, I think this year, this spring because of everything going virtual and the inability to visit the campus and sit in on classes, which is something I was hoping to do actually, but didn't get a chance to. So, those things really help you prepare leading up to the process, and then you go ahead and submit everything and you just wait and see what comes back.

Alison Monahan: Well, I'm curious, did you find there was any awkwardness around having to ask your professors for transfer recommendations? I know sometimes people get really worked up about that.

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, I think there is some inherent awkwardness to the process, because you are implying that you would be okay leaving the school, but I think most professors – I asked three of them for my recommendations – most professors are very gracious about the process and willing to offer a recommendation. And I find that sometimes your professors might ask why you're wanting to transfer, but if you're comfortable with offering those specific reasons, I think that will really help your professor understand where you're coming from, and then also use some of those tidbits that you share with them in the recommendation letter to present you as a strong candidate to the school you're hoping to transfer to. So, I think as someone in that position, if you're anxious or you're nervous, just battle through it and talk to some students who have transferred in the past, and just remember that a lot of other applicants are in your position as well and are trying to find the right professor or the right employer to ask a



recommendation from. So, just think about what you want to say to them, ask in person if that's possible, and I'm sure that they will be more than willing to help you.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think people transfer for all sorts of reasons. Presumably they would be kind of curious. We were definitely curious when we found out our roommate was leaving, but she had a pretty good reason for doing it and we were like, "Oh, okay, that makes sense." No one was upset about it. It was more just like, "Huh, that's interesting. What is this about?" So when you were looking at schools you might want to apply to or the one that you decided to accept, what kind of stuff were you considering that you felt was different from where you were?

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, I was lucky enough to have two offers, so I was able to compare those and then my old school as well. And for me, it really came down to, like I mentioned earlier, just minute things like the class size and also the specific clinical and course offerings. So, what I liked about Stanford, especially compared to NYU was the size. I felt very much a small fish, I guess, at NYU, and it reminded me of my experience going to a big public college where you had to take a lot of initiative. And that was great and challenging and helpful for self-growth, but I was hoping to get a little bit more support as I figure out the first step in my legal career. So, I really appreciated that Stanford has a smaller class size, and it was very apparent to me from the get-go after I received the acceptance call the resources available to individual students. For example, even before I accepted my offer, the career services advisor set up a Zoom call to talk about my second summer and my plans, and offer tips about how the Stanford career services office might be able to help. I found that to be very personal and really encouraged me to be a part of a smaller community. And I found that to be really great as a student, even in a virtual environment. So, that was one thing. And then the other thing that I liked about Stanford was the fact that clinics are full-time, so during the quarter you're taking a clinic, you're not taking any other courses, you're essentially working in a mini law firm on cases.

Alison Monahan: That's super interesting.

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, and I don't think that's very common in law schools. So, I found that to be a really great incentive for me to come to Stanford. And then the other thing that I think I mentioned earlier is that a lot of my family is in the Bay Area. And even though I don't intend to stay in the Bay Area after graduation, I figured that it would be great to be close to them for the last two years, and also to be able to live at home for a bit to save on rent. So, that was another big motivating factor that led me to my decision, and I'm really happy that I chose Stanford.



Alison Monahan: Nice. Yeah, I think particularly in this crazy environment, having a free place to stay with someone to help you out and do some stuff for you is fantastic. Well, one thing I've heard is that it can be kind of hard to fit in as a transfer student because that 1L experience is so intense, people maybe already have their study groups, their friend groups. Have you found this to be the case?

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, I think in a smaller school the challenge is a little bit compounded in that everyone knows each other or knows of each other, so it's very obvious when you're a newcomer.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Tiffany Lo: But that has also been a blessing too, because I found that people have been really kind and wonderful in striking up conversation and learning more about the 2L transfer students. So really, everyone I've met has been really opening, really friendly, have offered to be a resource in anything about Stanford at all. I think the biggest challenge is just the fact that we're doing virtual school.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Tiffany Lo: And we just see each other in classes, and we're not able to go to those lunch events or those conferences or those social events and have those organic conversations in between breaks. So, that's definitely something I miss very much. I loved that about 1L. And I'm sure a lot of current first year students and second year students are feeling the same way as well, but I think as long as you put yourself out there, a lot of the current students are very welcoming to transfer students. I think transfer students bring kind of a new perspective and a new sense of enthusiasm about the school and the campus that other people really appreciate. So I definitely haven't found it a problem to fit in, and in fact, I feel very much part of the community.

Alison Monahan: Well, that's great. Yeah, I think the virtual thing has definitely thrown a wrench into anyone who's coming into a new environment.

Tiffany Lo: Right.

Alison Monahan: Have you been able to get involved in different student activities at all – things like journals, moot courts, you mentioned clinics – which obviously you haven't done yet, but you're planning to do, I assume; different clubs as a transfer? How does all of that kind of play out?

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, I have. It's very dependent school to school. The selection process might be earlier for certain schools and later for others. I'm actually lucky enough to be on the Stanford Law Review, so I've been able to get on a journal and that has been really great. Again, everything is virtual, but I feel like I'm getting the



experience of working in the journal and understanding the moving parts and the importance to be detail-oriented. Yeah, all that jazz. In terms of moot court, my partner and I actually got off the moot court waitlist. So we were put on the waitlist and it was randomized, so we just happened to get a good position – I think number two on the list. We got off the waitlist, but after some consideration, I decided that I wanted to prioritize my other commitments. So, I'll definitely try for 3L year, but the opportunity is definitely available. For clinics, this was actually a bit of a challenge. So for me and my other fellow transfers, after we received our acceptance call, we were told that the clinic application deadline would close a couple of days after we had gotten the call, so we didn't have much time to decide about clinics, about applying to clinics specifically. But we did have, I think, two weeks to decide whether to accept or reject the transfer offer. So, I think most of us didn't put our hat in the ring for clinics, but some did, and some did get their clinic preferences. It was just kind of an odd timeline thing, where it was difficult to commit to doing a clinic because your commitment to doing a clinic also means that you're committed to that school. So I didn't decide to apply for any clinics. So that was kind of a difficulty for transfer students, and I know that our transfers student representative is trying to push for a deadline that is better for transfer students in the future, so hopefully that will change next year. But in any case, I am definitely planning on doing a clinic next year, and like I said, I'm just really excited about the full-time aspect of it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's a very interesting way to do it.

Tiffany Lo: Yeah. And then in terms of clubs – definitely, if I had stayed at NYU, I would have been able to lead some student organizations. So transferring has, for lack of a better word, deprived me of that opportunity, and now I'm a member of certain clubs and affinity groups, which is actually really nice in and of itself too, because I just get to hang out at the fence and get to know people without the stress of having to coordinate everything. So yeah, I think overall, I really felt integrated into the student life. Oh, actually I should mention too, Stanford has a mentorship program, so I actually became a 1L public interest mentor where we have a mentorship group with four mentors, four mentees, and then also a faculty advisor. And we just get together on a regular basis, and then also have one-on-one opportunities to talk about our experiences in the public interest sphere and what the 1Ls might be thinking for their summer or their career. So that's been another way for me to get to know more people and understand their interests and their motivation.

Alison Monahan: Great. Well, it sounds like one thing I'm getting out of this is for people who are thinking of transferring, it seems like it's really important to know what your own priorities are and be ready to act quickly when you accept an offer. Do you think that's true?



- Tiffany Lo: Yes, I definitely agree. The timeline is so short that once you get that acceptance call, you really have to figure out whether transferring is for you, and if you're ready to make the commitment to move cities to start over at a new school with new people, new professors, and also to think about what organizations and clubs you would be able to involve and in what capacity. The advice I would give to anyone going through the process is to really do your research even before the application process starts. Keep a spreadsheet, whatever way that helps you process the information – do that and reflect upon if you're ready to make the move. For me, I was fortunate not to have to move across country like some of my fellow transfers, but that in itself is very taxing and can be very frustrating with leaving friends and family and significant others behind. So, it's a huge commitment, but if you know what you're getting into, I think you will feel really great in your choice at the end of the day.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And where were you working over the summer? Were you working in the Bay Area?
- Tiffany Lo: Yeah, I was working in the Bay Area. I was lucky to split between a firm and in-house, but it was all from home.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Oh, true. Yeah, of course. I forgot about that part.
- Tiffany Lo: Right.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Often what happened in the past with the transfer situation was you would immediately jump into doing OCI, but this year because of the pandemic, OCI has been postponed. In a way, that actually probably worked out better, I guess, for you. It was less crazy in your case. Yeah, that is one of the things that people sometimes wonder or worry about when they're transferring is, "How will this impact my job opportunities?" What are your thoughts around that?
- Tiffany Lo: Yeah, like you mentioned earlier, the situation is very different for transfers in my year, but I will say with OCI coming up, the question still remains, why you transferred and how you feel like you're doing in your new school? So, I think it's a matter of, again, just explaining where you're coming from and why the new school is a great fit for you. I do not think that it does impact job opportunities, and I would actually say it could strengthen you as a candidate because you've shown that you are willing to take this risk of transferring and integrating into a new environment. And then through your involvement in the school, you can also show that you're someone who takes initiative and likes to be part of community. So I think it's just a matter of crafting your narrative and showing the employer these qualities that will help you as an associate or just a lawyer in the organization. So yeah, I think that should not be a worry for any transfer student.



Alison Monahan: I agree with that. We actually have a [previous podcast](#) where we talk about that with an ex-BigLaw recruiter, and we all come down on the side of, this is not a negative thing. Maybe you have to talk about it, I think having your story ready to go is great, but it's not going to be a negative impact at all, so people can, I think, stop worrying about that.

Tiffany Lo: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And another thing people tend to worry about is, "What if I transfer and then I did really well, and then suddenly I'm in a more competitive environment or something and my grades go down?" Is that something that you were concerned about or that you've found to be a problem?

Tiffany Lo: I can definitely see that concern and I have felt it many times myself at my old school and at my new school, because people at law schools are very impressive already and have a wide array of experience. So I think for me, it's just a matter of battling that impostor syndrome and knowing that you were accepted for a reason and that you can succeed at your new school. So, it has been a concern at times, but I found that it can be combated in many ways like talking to other students who are probably feeling the same things, and also making use of your professor's resources, whether they're office hours or they're one-on-one just casual coffee chats. Again, similar to the job opportunities question, you shouldn't be too worried about that and just focus your efforts on doing well in your classes and also picking out activities and clubs that really speak to your interests. At the end of the day, law school isn't all about grades, and I think there are so many great opportunities for law students to become involved even before you're licensed as an attorney. And law school is a great time to try different short-term projects and short-term volunteer opportunities and see where your strengths really lie and how you want to put that into practice, either as a full-time lawyer or through pro bono interest.

Alison Monahan: Great. And do you feel like you've been able to build relationships with your new professors in the same way maybe you did as a 1L? Like you've mentioned, people being very welcoming – does that extend, I assume, to your professors as well?

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, they have been really great. Again, there is a part of it that requires you to take initiative to go to their office hours, to email and ask questions and ask for help or ask for a one-on-one meeting, because classes can still be... Well, depending on if you're taking the doctrinal or a seminar, the professor might not know you much beyond your name, so there's definitely a lot of initiative that you should take. But my professors specifically have been really wonderful. Actually, they came together and offered a transfer lunch hour with professors from different disciplines in the school, where they were able to talk about some of their research, the classes they're teaching, and offer advice about how



to do well and how to integrate into the community. Again, similar with getting to know new classmates at your transfer schools, I do not think that the professors look down upon transfers at all. In fact, like the employers, they probably think you're really impressive for taking the risk and leaping to a new community, so go out and find some professors to talk to.

Alison Monahan: Great advice. Well, before we wrap up, and we're running out of time here, obviously you did well your first year, you were in a position to transfer to a really great school. So, any advice for 1Ls on how to replicate that and get good grades themselves?

Tiffany Lo: Oh my gosh, I could go on for hours on this subject, but I think...

Alison Monahan: Maybe we should have a new podcast on that.

Tiffany Lo: Yeah. I think there is no hard and fast rules, in my opinion, it's just a matter of finding a system that works for you. So, for some people, law school is also about the social experience. Networking is actually gravely important in law school, because these are people who will help you with questions in your class, and then also offer mental support when you're feeling just really overwhelmed. And then in the long term, they're people that could get you a job or get you new clients. So, those things should not be treated lightly in law school, and it's really important, in my opinion, to find a balance between that and grades. You can read about this on the [Law School Toolbox blog](#) and [Reddit](#) posts and all those different other resources out there, but I think the basic tenets are to have good time management skills and understand when you have to do your reading, do your outline to review, so that not everything is left to the last minute. Although the attempt to digest everything and put them into kind of a framework, does have to come later in the semester or the quarter. So, that's a huge thing, and then related to that is also having some balance. I strongly believe that law school should not be your life, and in fact, a lot of people say that you should treat it as a job in which you stop after 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM, and go off and watch TV and read some books or spend time with family.

Alison Monahan: That sounds very aspirational.

Tiffany Lo: And I really try to do that.

Alison Monahan: Are you?

Tiffany Lo: Yeah, I try to do that. I think I don't really read books as much as go on Netflix or watch YouTube.

Alison Monahan: Right.



Tiffany Lo:

But I'm trying to do more, like read 10 pages a day or something. And this relates to balance again. Just keeping in touch with family and friends and your significant other can really help you stay sane, because these are the people who don't understand the law school experience. Of course, it's great to be able to commiserate with your fellow law students about how awful it is and how stressed you can feel, but these people who are detached from the experience can give you some perspective. And then especially if they're also in school, but another program – I think you can, again, share that experience and tell them a little bit about what it's like to be in law school and solicit their support, but also realize that you should give time to be present with them and to be grateful for their support through a really difficult time in your schooling and in trying to prepare for your legal career. So, it's really important to keep those relationships going and not to cut ties with them or say, "I'm not speaking to you for these three months", because they can actually turn out to be really, really great rocks for you. And I'm just really grateful for my partner and my family for their role in helping me be successful during my 1L year. And then just smaller tips about academics – I would recommend not outlining earlier. I think the word "outlining" might be a little bit of a misleading concept here, but I would be reviewing every weekend the material that I've learned throughout the week, and try to digest it. And in the later weeks, try to put it together with everything I've learned. I found that to be a really great way to put me on pace and on track, so that I don't feel overwhelmed at the end of the semester in terms of preparing for exams. So that's, I think, a really great way to make sure that you are successful and don't feel overwhelmed.

And lastly, just try to have fun. I think law school can be a really great time, actually. I've made some really great friends and have been able to try new foods by going to these events in which foods around my campus are served, and learn about new places. And especially being in New York City my first year, I always made a point to try to do something fun on the weekend, whether going to the museum or going to the park or something of that nature. So, I encourage you to have fun and to make friends and make connections, and the rest will follow.

Alison Monahan:

Awesome. Well, we second most, if not all of that advice, absolutely. And clearly, it worked for you, so great. Any final thoughts you want to share with people around the transfer process before we wrap up?

Tiffany Lo:

I would just say transferring is definitely stressful and can elicit a lot of questions from family, friends, even yourself sometimes. And it is a big commitment – you're moving cities, you're moving away from some friends that you've made. And you will sacrifice some opportunities, but at the end of the day, if you feel that it is the best way for you to advance in your career and to grow personally, I think that you will really come to appreciate your decision and your courage in



the moment. So, I applaud you and I wish you all the best in your transfer process.

Alison Monahan: Well, congratulations, Tiffany! It sounds like it's worked out great for you. We are unfortunately out of time. Thank you so much for joining us. This has been really fantastic.

Tiffany Lo: Thank you so much, Alison.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. 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, because we'd 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!

#### **RESOURCES:**

[Law School Toolbox blog](#)

[Tiffany Lo blog posts](#)

[Podcast Episode 122: How to Transfer Law Schools \(with Mihal Ansik\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 234: How Will Transferring Law School Impact the Job Search? \(w/Sadie Jones\)](#)

[Transferring Law Schools: Three Things You Need to Know](#)

[Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Fire: Transfer Students in Law School](#)

[Ahead of the Curve: So You Want to Transfer Law Schools...](#)

[Transferring Law Schools: Why I Jumped Ship \(Part 1\)](#)

[Transferring Law Schools: Why I Jumped Ship \(Part 2\)](#)