



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 when to start the 2L job hunt. 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 have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about when to start the 2L job hunt. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, we're recording this in early February; it's probably coming out a few weeks later. If I'm a 2L who doesn't have a summer job, how concerned should I be?

Sadie Jones: I think you should be a little bit concerned, to be totally honest. It's late. Nothing's ever over until we get to the summer, so there's still time to find a job, but this is when you should really be kicking it into gear and be looking for your backup plan job. The thing that you were like, "I might not want to do this, but I have an option of working for someone I know", or potentially working for a professor, because you are sort of past the general window of 2L jobs. So, this is where you need to find a job for the summer, whatever it is, legal-related.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. You definitely want to be maybe taking that option B or C that you wouldn't have taken in December or something like that.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, this is where you need to find something, you need to get it set. And I still think there's a job for everyone, but this isn't a time where you can see what comes around. This is where you need something.

Alison Monahan: You need something settled.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. There's no more picky.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, what if I'm a 1L and I'm listening to this and I'm freaking out because I'm like, "Oh my gosh, maybe that'll be me next year." Should I already be looking for a 2L job?



- Sadie Jones: I think it's way too early for a 1L to be thinking about a 2L job when we're talking about it's still the winter. Most 1Ls don't even have their 1L jobs yet; I would say it's probably like 50/50 at this point. Once we get out of January, all the early people who were thinking about this in the fall probably did get their 1L jobs, but everyone else is kind of in the thick of it. So, I would say if you don't have a 1L job, that's where your focus should be. I wouldn't spend too much energy late winter thinking about your 2L job yet if you're a 1L. This is not where I would put my focus.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think that's right. If you're a 1L, a) you need to be thinking about your first-year summer job. If you haven't secured that yet, that's step one. And also, at this point, grades are really the most important thing, right?
- Sadie Jones: I always tell my students that. I think that second semester 1L year is probably your most important time for grades. And I'm not trying to put extra pressure on people, just letting students know that this is important. If you only have a set amount of time, which you do, that's where I would be putting my energy, into doing the best you can grades-wise, because that's going to lead to the job. And even if you didn't do well first semester, this is a chance to improve. And I would say that most students really do improve second semester; I usually see somewhat of upward trajectory second semester. So I just wouldn't want you to split your focus too much on jobs when the grades really are the most important thing going into the job.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think that upward trend, if you didn't perform as well as you'd hoped first semester is really what is going to be your storyline when you're in these interviews of, "Well, first semester was an adjustment but as you can see, I really applied myself and I did better second semester." That's ideally the story you want to be telling – not, "Yeah, I bombed, my entire first year. Please give me a job."
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, it's a much harder story, and that's where you have to say, "Okay, what are my options? What can fit?" Because you can't just make something up grades-wise. They are what they are, they're in black and white. And so, you just definitely don't want to see a downward trajectory second semester, because the story usually is, "Oh, I had trouble adjusting, law school is so different, and I got academic help", whatever it is. It's just a much harder story to tell if there was no improvement, or worst case, your grades went down.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, so I think that's your first priority. You'll find a 2L job later. So, what's the typical timeframe when students really should be thinking about some different types of jobs? Let's start with BigLaw.
- Sadie Jones: I would say BigLaw has the tightest timeframe because it's a set process, and it happens over a really short period of time, and it's gotten shorter and shorter in



the years that I've been doing this. Generally, you're going to do your bidding in June, and there's a range depending on the school. And you're going to interview, have your OCI interviews probably the end of July at the earliest, more like throughout August, and then callbacks are going to be as soon as you can schedule them. So generally, the whole thing in terms of OCI is over by the end of September. It might go into October for some schools or for some employers that did a slower process. But generally BigLaw is a tight timeframe, so you want to be ready to go and know that everything is figured out before you get into that timeframe, because once you're there, it's going to be hard to make a lot of changes or spend too much time researching things. You want to have that all set going into it.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. Yeah, it's definitely gotten more and more and more compressed and also moved further forward, so it's just something to be aware of. Even if you are a 1L listening to this, you might just want to check if OCI is something you're going to do and something that's hopefully going to result in a possible job for you. What are the deadlines? How does this process work? You don't need to worry about it at this point, but you do just want to be aware of like, "Am I scheduling travel right in the middle of when I'm supposed to be doing interviews?" That kind of thing you probably don't want to do.

Sadie Jones: And I would say, you could just put the dates into your calendar.

Alison Monahan: Right, exactly.

Sadie Jones: I always think that's a good idea. The dates are definitely already on there at this point. And if they're not, they will be soon. So, I would just put it in your calendar because the thing you want to do is get all of this stuff done as quickly as possible. I've heard students say, "Oh, they asked me for a callback, but I had a trip planned." Now, I understand if it's like a family wedding, but generally maybe don't plan just fun travel around that time, or other things. You want to get in as soon as possible because they're going to see other people and make offers to them. Even though you have the same shot, spaces can be limited. So, you want to do everything as soon as possible; do not be lax about that.

Alison Monahan: No, definitely, I agree. If somebody asks you for a callback, you want to be on their schedule as soon as possible. And yeah, saying, "Oh well, I had this pre-existing plan to go scuba diving in Tahiti" is probably not going to make the best impression.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Now it's like, you have six months to plan out when you could do some fun things, so you make yourself available during that time period. And the other thing is you don't want to be like, "Oh well, they weren't my top choice, so I was waiting to hear from somebody else." You should get all the interviews



that you possibly can in as soon as possible, so that's something you can think about now.

Alison Monahan: I agree. You can always turn people down, but you don't want to be hanging out just waiting around to see if your very first choice gets back to you, because if they don't, then you don't have options. And you want to have options in this process, ideally.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Until you have a job, it's not over.

Alison Monahan: Right, yeah. Alright, well, let's shift gears. How about other things, like for example, public interest?

Sadie Jones: Public interest is not the same process where everyone does the same thing. At least that's what I've seen. Public interest a lot of times does participate in OCI, so that will be the same, like the dates will be the same.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I know some schools do a later one where it's public interest. It's not OCI, but similar type of thing.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, it's more like a job fair. Or there might be job fairs in your city for public interest. You can look into all of that earlier rather than later, so you know, again, what the dates are. But it's not going to be a set. There may be things that are later from what I've seen, or there could be things that are earlier. Just know which public interest jobs you're interested in, or if you're just interested in any of them, spread yourself out and see what all the dates are, but get those in. Because they still do have a process, it's just not as regulated, I would say.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think one thing to keep in mind here is, you don't want to forget about funding, because depending on your school, you may have to apply for funding if you're doing public interest. And that might be something you apply for pretty early in the year, sometimes even over the summer. So again, you don't need to panic about this, but you just want to be aware, talk to the people who organize this at your school, find out from them what are the deadlines you need to meet in order to get this funding, because you want to make sure you're getting paid if possible.

Sadie Jones: And if you're not sure what kind of job you can get, it seems like there's no harm in applying for these things, because it'd be a lot worse to not have any funding for something than to maybe say, "Oh, okay. I got a private job and I won't need this."

Alison Monahan: Right, yeah, "I'll turn it down."



- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Make sure that you have gotten in whatever you need to get in by the dates you need to get in. And that may be a conversation to have with Career Services.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Sadie Jones: But I totally agree, you should have all of that in, because there're a lot of students who are begging afterwards, they missed the deadline. And a lot of these things can't be changed. The money has been allocated.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And if you miss the deadline – well, too bad for you. Somebody else didn't, and they get the cash.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. And you're unpaid.
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. And then how about other employers – things like government, small firms? People are not typically doing externships with judges at this point, but maybe something like that. When should people be thinking about this stuff?
- Sadie Jones: I would say that that's more on a rolling basis. What I would do is probably late spring do your research, make a list, go to the websites, because these are probably going to be more like direct apply. And I think there's no harm in just applying as soon as you have your documents and you're ready to go. That being said, they're not going to have probably a set summer class in the way that BigLaw or even the DA's office would, or something like that. But I still think it's a situation where even if they don't give you a deadline, you still want to be in early, because they may hire all the people they want to hire. This is something you can look at later as your plan B and C if you need to, and so you could potentially apply later. But if this is what you want to do, then I would say get these done early also.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's good advice. The advice overall is just make sure you know what your deadlines are and work towards those, but there's no need to panic at this point, really, if you're a 1L.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Just think about what your plan is going to be.
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. Make sure you're not blowing deadlines because you just haven't thought about this until February.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly.



- Alison Monahan: Alright, well, if somebody wants to get a jump on some of this stuff, what do you suggest they do either in the spring semester if they have some time, or early summer might be more realistic for people?
- Sadie Jones: Well, I think the thing you should always have is an updated resume or other documents, an updated LinkedIn. That's something you should be doing as time goes by, because you probably have your 1L resume, but you're going to update it with things that happened during second semester. That's something that you can have going, and that being said, you're going to keep updating it as things change. And that also includes a cover letter. That's something I think you could work on in the spring, like a general cover letter, and then maybe you're applying to a couple of different buckets of jobs. So, if you're doing BigLaw but maybe you're also looking at some smaller firms or something, maybe you have two different drafts of your cover letter. But I get a lot of students who come and they're like, "I've never done a cover letter before. I don't even know where to start." And that's something I would say, you definitely can be working on ahead of time and there're lots of resources for that. Harvard and Yale both have links, if you just Google it, to cover letter and resume templates that I think are really good to get started. Obviously lots of people have templates, and there's a template probably in your Word documents and things like that. But those are all things that I think you can be doing over time, and that's definitely the place to start, is with your documents.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And anything, like you said, that's happened either in this first semester or later, at the end of second semester – like if you CALI'd a class, that should be on there, if you are involved in a certain pro bono organization, if you join a journal, all of these things. This is what employers are looking for. I think it can be easy to forget that you need to put this stuff on there, but you definitely do.
- Sadie Jones: And let's say that you already know what your 1L job is going to be – you can start thinking about that. You don't need to wait till the job happens or is over. You can start thinking, as you go, "What are my tasks there? What am I going to use these bullet points? What do I think are the most important things to get out of it?" That's great going into it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and also think about what to take off your resume too, because at some point, jobs – if you were a barista in high school – probably doesn't need to be on your resume when you're applying to a law firm. That kind of thing. It's easy with the resume, if you have one that you've just been updating over time, that it gets a bit calcified and you're not really looking at it with that fresh eye, saying, "Okay, what's most relevant to this job? Am I just listing out that I was a lifeguard, or is there something that I could put on here that's going to be more impactful?"



- Sadie Jones: Totally. And I think students get weirdly attached to certain things on their resume.
- Alison Monahan: Totally.
- Sadie Jones: It's like they take it very personally when I take it off. And it's like, I had to make some tough decisions here. It had to be one page, it had to make sense, there're more relevant things. It doesn't mean that that experience from high school didn't mean anything; it just means that it's not as relevant now to what you're doing. And you should think about who the employer is. You can even have different resumes. People are really big on, let's say a lot of community service. And I'm not saying that you can't put some community service, but if you're applying to BigLaw, putting an entire section of your community service, it might not convey the thing you want it to convey. Sometimes it does say, "Oh, are you more interested in public interest jobs?" or something like that. So, think about things like that when you're working on your resume.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. And vice versa – if you're applying for a public interest position and most of your experience has been in, say, the corporate sector previously, you kind of have to tone that down a little bit and maybe bump up the things that you were doing outside of work and volunteering and that kind of thing, because they're thinking in the opposite direction of like, "Oh, does this person really just want to go into a corporate firm or they're applying here as a back-up?" Nobody likes to feel like they're your second choice.
- Sadie Jones: Totally. And I think that that's where it's good to have a second eye, because your resume, you've seen it a lot, you've updated it, it looks a certain way to you, it tells a certain story to you. It may look totally different to a fresh eye, and I think that's always helpful. Don't be defensive, hear what they have to say.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think sometimes people think it has to be this very objective document and they're somehow lying if they take something off of it, or they change something so it sounds different. But this is a persuasive document. This is not an objective memo, basically.
- Sadie Jones: And a lie is a lie. If there's something on your resume that did not happen, that is a lie.
- Alison Monahan: Right, you can't lie. You should not lie on your resume.
- Sadie Jones: And I'm very careful about that, but I actually think the line is super clear. You can phrase something a certain way to focus on certain skills you use. You don't necessarily have to say how many hours you did the job. But as long as you did it, it's the truth. Like you said, you're telling a story with your resume.



- Alison Monahan: Right. And you need to have actually done the job. You can't just make things up and put them on there.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly, that's a lie. Or saying you got a grade you didn't get, or that you ranked in a way you didn't. Those are all lies. But phrasing something in a certain way to focus on certain skills, that's not a lie.
- Alison Monahan: And also be aware that your school may have things you can or can't put on your resume. We weren't technically allowed to calculate a GPA, we weren't allowed to put a GPA on a resume. So, you want to make sure you understand those rules too, because those are the kind of things employers typically know about and they're just going to be like, "Well, that's weird", if you're the only person from your school that puts your GPA or class rank on a school that never does that.
- Sadie Jones: Totally. Also, I often take people's GPAs or ranks off when they're not high. And I think sometimes students view that as lying, like they just want to put it out there. You don't need to advertise it on your resume, they're going to see it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, if they want a transcript, they can ask for a transcript.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. So, that's like an art of what's the point where you put it on or don't put it on. And that's like a conversation to have with somebody. But if it's not very high, I just feel like it doesn't need to stand out as the first thing, because your law school is going to be the first thing on your resume.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And then sometimes you see people trying to be like, "Almost top 15%" or something.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I hate that.
- Alison Monahan: And you're just like, "No, you're not top 15%. Don't put that on there."
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. Or like, "Just out of range." What does that mean?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, "Almost got like..."
- Sadie Jones: On the cusp.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's like, no, you either are or you're not. This is an objective number.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. And focus on other good things. So, your GPA may not be the thing that's the best thing on there, but maybe you have good work experience or other things.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, everybody's got something. So if your GPA is not your selling point... I mean, if you do have perfect grades, yeah, put that at the very top. But only if your school allows you to.
- Sadie Jones: And I think certain schools also have rules about how things have to look. So I do think make sure that that's all been signed off on and you didn't do anything you weren't supposed to do.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because you don't want to draw attention in that way of like, "Huh, this doesn't look like everything else we always get from this school. Is something weird going on here?"
- Sadie Jones: Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, well, what else could I be thinking about doing? All my docs are looking good, I've checked them, I've double checked them, I've had other people look at them. What else could I possibly be doing?
- Sadie Jones: So, I would start networking earlier rather than later. And I think people have this view of networking as this very set thing where you are calling somebody up and asking them for a job. And I think that's intimidating to students. And that's not what I consider networking. I think it's just building relationships. So, maybe it's sort of thinking about people that you talked to during your 1L Job search, or people in your network, putting it on your LinkedIn that you're looking for a 2L Job sometime in the spring, making sure that people you know know that. I think networking is a lot easier when it's done over a longer period of time. So, when you're trying to get it all in during the few weeks before you're going to start applying – that's stressful, and I think you can come across as desperate. But when you're doing it in a way where you're just kind of building on relationships and things like that over a period of time, and following up with people, and going to events and things like that that are held on campus – that's what I sort of view as networking. So, I would say take an easier approach to it and start thinking about it before you're going to apply to everything.
- Alison Monahan: I agree. I think the more organic it is, the better. And it could literally be something as simple as you saw an article that you think somebody might be interested in, and you send them an email, it's like, "Hey, I saw this article, I was thinking of you." It doesn't have to be like, "Oh, and by the way, I'm looking for a job."
- Sadie Jones: I think that's where students get caught up, and it shouldn't look like that. That's not what I think of as networking. And it's probably new to most students that haven't had these types of jobs before, so I totally understand. But yeah, it's just building relationships.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. And say that person's in your city or town and they respond and be like, "Oh, thanks so much, that's great. How are you doing?" "Oh, I'm doing really well. Do you have time for a coffee? Maybe we could catch up sometime in the next few weeks."

Sadie Jones: And you sort of let them know what's going on, and then it comes up that, "Oh, here's what I'm doing this summer, and wow, we already have to think about next summer."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, like, "Oh gosh, whoo!" And then people are generally like, "Oh, maybe you should talk to this person I know." It happens more organically, hopefully.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So, I think you could start thinking about that now. The other thing is, like we talked about, kind of coming up with a game plan. And again, this is something that will take time, so I don't want it to take away from your studies. We're talking about sort of later in the spring, when you're not deep into the semester in your work. But I would start researching where you want to apply, make a list. I like Excel. You can use lots of things to keep track of where you're applying. But I would have a list that says the employer, maybe their website, if they have a date you need to apply, where you need to apply, where they're located, things you can sort, maybe who you're going to contact there if there's some networking you're going to do. And this would include job fairs in your area, there're sometimes diversity fairs. There're job fairs that are specific to like IP or certain practice groups – look into those. Maybe you're going to fly yourself somewhere to go to a job fair because you think you could get a job out of it. That might be worth your time and money. So, these are all things I would plan out because you could budget for that. What's the best use of your time? And a lot of these things can happen before OCI, so make sure you know the dates.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think if you wanted to start on some of this stuff early, one way you could do it is block out, say, like two hours a week on the weekend – every Saturday at 3:00 PM, you're going to sit down and you're going to do this work. So that you're not letting it bleed into the rest of your life, but you are chunking it and doing a solid amount of effort before the end of the semester.

Sadie Jones: And it's on your calendar with a reminder. I find those are a lot harder to throw away. You see it, you're planning your weekend and you're like, "Wow, I said I would do these two hours", and you're more likely to do it.

Alison Monahan: Oh, so much more likely.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, so I totally agree, I always tell students to do that. And even if you skip some of it, you'll probably fall through with some of those times, and there's always something you can do in that time period.



- Alison Monahan: Right, definitely. I think this is also a good time to get help on any weaker areas that you know about. Do you need to talk to somebody about your plan? It could be Career Services, it could be someone else. This is a great time to get to know people in Career Services if you haven't done that yet. But interview skills, somebody to look at your documents – you want to have a team here, basically.
- Sadie Jones: And let's say that you know that this part of your 1L search didn't go well. You just kind of know that the interviews did not go as well as you expected. Maybe you've done some mock interviews and you've gotten some feedback. Work on those areas. Ask yourself where you can improve without defensiveness. And I think that's where doing it earlier rather than later is better, because you may need to let go of some feelings about it.
- Alison Monahan: Right. It gives you time to process.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Because if you're looking at this in July, I just find that students end up making this rehearsed script, because they don't know what to do. And I highly recommend not doing that. You don't want to sound like in an interview you just read out this thing because you didn't know what to do. Get yourself comfortable with having more of a conversation in an interview. And that's all something that I think takes time.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And also it would be a good place if you're practicing your networking. That's a great kind of low risk area, if you can find somebody to go to coffee with you and talk about things, because some of this is just about getting comfortable talking about yourself, talking about your plans, all these kinds of things. And just being in that slightly more professional environment, I think can be intimidating to people.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And that's where I also think you could think ahead to what you are going to wear.
- Alison Monahan: Yes, definitely. Outfits.
- Sadie Jones: Are they Zoom interviews? Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Get your outfits ready.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Think about sales that happen certain time of year. Some store always has their sales or something like that. And so, if you have six months to think about it, that gives you more time to find something that you're going to feel comfortable in. And even thinking about what the environment's going to be. I think a lot of places are still doing Zoom interviews, so what is that going to look



like? Just sort of thinking ahead generally to that stuff leaves less stress at the last minute.

Alison Monahan: Right, because you don't want to have a situation where someone's like, "Great, we want to do a Zoom interview tomorrow", and you have nothing to wear and you don't have a place to do that and your computer broke.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. Like, where are you going to be living at that time? Think about, "Okay, I'm going to have to do interviews from this space, or I'm going to have to find somewhere else", or something like that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Does your school have a place you could do it? But if not, do you have a blank wall at your house that you can sit in front of and maybe get a little plant?

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: It'll look fine.

Sadie Jones: Do you have good Wi-Fi and everything? So, that's all stuff I think you can think about ahead of time so that it's not, like you said, a rush the day before.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. I remember I got a request for a 1L interview over winter break and I didn't have a suit at that point that was really suitable. And I remember trying to go shopping, I think it was in Atlanta, at my grandparent's house and everything they had in the South was colored and I was like, "I'm interviewing in New York City. I need black."

Sadie Jones: You have to look conservative.

Alison Monahan: No, I got this personal shopper who was trying to dress me in things with feathers on them. I'm like, "No, this is not really..." It was very stressful. I think in the end I just went to a Brooks Brothers or something and it was fine. But still, it was definitely stressful that didn't need to be happening if it was actually a plan that I'd had.

Sadie Jones: And that is a reminder about outfits, that you don't want to stand out in the wrong way. The legal industry is just pretty conservative and kind of old school. And so, this isn't really a chance to go too far out of anyone's comfort zone.

Alison Monahan: Express your personality.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. You can express it a little bit, maybe with some jewelry.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. Like a colored earring might work.



- Sadie Jones: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So something pretty boring, but it needs to be something you feel comfortable in that you can just throw on and feel like you're ready to go. And you probably want to have a couple of different options in case you have to do multiple interviews in a row.
- Sadie Jones: And that's where you talk to Career Services about all this stuff to get their opinion, see what they think.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Yeah, exactly. Alright, well, we're about out of time. One more question. Do you think it's worth doing OCI for BigLaw if it's kind of a long shot option for someone?
- Sadie Jones: I think if you have the time and inclination and it's something you really would want if somehow you got it, then I kind of do think you don't have that much to lose, other than the time. If your GPA is so low that there's absolutely no shot at it, then yeah, I probably wouldn't do it. But I think you'd have to think of it as sort of your backup option. And so, you have your things that are more likely, in the same way when you're applying to law schools, you have your safeties and your reaches. So, you just think of the BigLaw OCI thing as a reach. But I will say I have seen people that are sort of on the cusp that I think maybe weren't going to do it, and they do end up doing well. And sometimes those grade cutoffs are not exact. You can't be way outside of it, but if you're a little outside of it, I don't think that's a reason not to apply. So, I think it's just a matter of where you want to put your time resources. But if it's something you think you would like, I just don't see a reason not to do it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think as long as you have other plans that maybe are more feasible. And also sometimes people don't realize that they may have personal characteristics that maybe overcome a slightly lower GPA, like they worked, I don't know, as an engineer before law school and they want to do patent litigation. It's like, if you have a master's degree in Electrical Engineering, that's a different person walking in than somebody who just got out of college.
- Sadie Jones: Or you are somebody who is going to do really well in interviews. I do meet those people and I'm like, "I think you have to give it a chance because they're really going to like you." And so, they might be able to sell you.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you can get in the door, someone's maybe going to go to bat for you if you just know that you're really great at interviewing, which some people are, just like some people are great at standardized testing.
- Sadie Jones: But you need to have heard that feedback from somebody who knows what they're talking about.



Alison Monahan: Right. Not just like, "Oh, you're so nice. I'm sure you'll get a job."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. You need to hear that from a professional who's like, "Wow, you're really good at this."

Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you can get in the door, you've got a real shot here.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Or just like other characteristics that they may be looking for in terms of diversity. There are lots of different ways that the numbers may not be exact, but like you said, if your GPA is like an entire point off, it's probably pointless.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. But I think that some people do take themselves out of the game because, "Oh, it said the GPA cutoff was a 3.5 and I'm a 3.3." And my reaction is, that's not enough to not apply.

Alison Monahan: No, that's close enough.

Sadie Jones: So, don't take yourself out of the game for no reason.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I would say also that's close enough. You should at least give that a shot.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Because frankly, I've worked at a lot of firms – they just sort of made up these things anyway. They weren't set in stone.

Sadie Jones: Well, usually you're actually forced as a firm to put a GPA range through the OCI system. And there aren't a lot of places that write out what their GPA cutoff is, or even have that in a book or rules or anything like that. It's just kind of like, "Oh, it feels like this is where most people fall."

Alison Monahan: I worked at one firm where their GPA cutoff was laughably high. Literally nobody in the school would have had this GPA, and they hired a lot of people from the school.

Sadie Jones: I think I can guess the place.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. So, no one took this very seriously.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And there are places that really won't overlook grades for anything.



- Alison Monahan: If it's Wachtell, they probably want to have the actual high GPA they're asking for.
- Sadie Jones: Right. And the person could have loved you, but there's nothing that the interviewer can say to the hiring person that'll get you through. And there are just places like that, but I would say that isn't most places.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's really not. So, take them somewhat seriously, but don't take yourself out of the running because you're not quite in the bucket. But again, if you have 2.2, then yeah, they're not hiring you. Sorry.
- Sadie Jones: Well, and you need to think about that. I will say that I hear from some students who come and are like, "I want BigLaw. I'm going to get into BigLaw", and then you look at their transcript and you have to say to them, "Look, that is unlikely." And you have to be open to hearing that. There's nothing that anyone can coach you or change if your GPA is a 2.0. Maybe you wanted BigLaw, but it's not going to happen during the summer. So, I will say be realistic if it's just a backup option. It's like, okay, you want BigLaw – that's unlikely, so let's look at smaller firms, or let's look at some alternative.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think you want to be realistic, but not overly pessimistic. Alright, well, any final thoughts on this?
- Sadie Jones: My final thought is, it's a balancing act between, like I said, your focus should be on your grades and doing well second semester – that comes first. And then second is getting started on all of these things, because it does matter. And if you give yourself more time to work on it, it's going to be less stressful and sort of a more pleasant process. But if your grades, you're struggling, that always comes first and this may need to wait. So, this is all optional if you're able to fit it in.
- Alison Monahan: I think that's good advice. And if you are struggling, you need to figure out what you can do to turn your semester around, whether it's talking to academic services, working with a tutor, getting a study group. If you know things are not going well, this is time to really put all of your attention on trying to improve your grades, because ultimately, that's going to have a huge impact on your job search.
- Sadie Jones: And that's why I wanted to be very clear, and it may scare some people, that second semester grades are really the most important. So you need to do whatever you need to do to just show that there was improvement. I'm not saying you need to get all As, but showing that improvement makes all the difference in your story.



- Alison Monahan: Absolutely. It's a much easier story to tell than, "Yeah, I didn't do anything differently and I got the same grades I got the first semester, which I was disappointed in."
- Sadie Jones: There's nothing they can really do with that story.
- Alison Monahan: No, there's really not. It's not a great story. Alright, well, with that, unfortunately, 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, 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 and 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 can always contact us via our website [contact form](https://www.lawschooltoolbox.com/contact) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

RESOURCES:

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[Podcast Episode 114: Law School Networking 101](#)

[Podcast Episode 152: Top OCI Mistakes to Avoid \(w/Sadie Jones\)](#)

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