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How I'm Spending My Summer (Getting Acclimated to the Physical Workplace)

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How I'm Spending My Summer (Getting Acclimated to the Physical Workplace)

Posted on [May 17, 2022](#) by [Olivia Smith Schlinck](#)

It's mid-May which, in the law school world, means finals, grading, graduation and the impending summer. As the spring semester winds to a close, I've been finding myself staring at a mostly blank – beautifully, thankfully blank – summer calendar and wondering: *how will I fill my time?*

I've been in my current role for about a year and a half now; I started full-time in January 2021, meaning my job has always had the pandemic play some central role. At first, I was on campus one or two days per week, with a gradual increase to a full five days on site. My days were filled with teaching, curriculum prep, reference shifts, Bluebook trainings, and grading. While I rarely felt entirely overbooked or overworked (I'm a [typical Zoomer when it comes to prioritizing work-life balance](#)), I did often feel like I was running a marathon at a pace way faster than I'd trained for. I was able to keep up with my work – I'd like to think even excel, in some cases – but I did not have much time for anything secondary. In the lull of the last few weeks, I have realized that one major secondary area I had neglected was becoming acclimated to the physical workplace.

I'm sure many of you are in the same boat. Perhaps you started a new position during the pandemic or shortly before it began. You might by now feel comfortable performing your job duties but less so in the physical aspects of work: the layout of the law school, or the location of certain books in the library, or locating the best water fountain in the building, for example.

Or perhaps you shifted to remote work and only recently returned to the office on a more regular basis. When returning to the office, you likely noticed some changes – your favorite lunch spot is closed, or the place you store office supplies was moved, or your normally frigid office is now always hot.

If you're anything like me, you might've ignored these changes, focusing your attention instead on the daily grind. If you are anxiously awaiting the arrival of a quieter summer calendar, I urge you to join me in spending some time playing catchup on the tangible parts of the workplace.

For example, and for accountability's sake, this summer I will:

- Wander the law school building to better understand where different classrooms and offices are located. Location-based reference questions like “where is Career Services?” are not uncommon and I should be able to answer them without having to look it up on the school's website.
- Find a favorite local coffee shop. I frequent one around the corner that isn't the best, and good coffee is essential to a successful school year.
- Take myself on a slow tour of the library's stacks to become better acquainted with our collection. I vaguely know the location of different items, but I want to be better here.

- Venture further than a two-block radius to scope out potential new lunch spots. I work in New York City, home to delicious and plentiful food, which makes it almost embarrassing that the Sweetgreen around the corner is my go-to when I don't bring lunch from home.
- Linger in the staff/faculty pantry and make a point to talk to anyone who comes inside. There are still some faculty and staff who I don't recognize – and who don't recognize me and sometimes mistake me for a student – and I'd like to establish better connections with my colleagues.
- Finally take a trip into the law school's basement. Maybe bringing a buddy, I've heard it's scary and I'm afraid of basements.
- Finish decorating my office. I moved offices about a year ago and while it has come a long way, I really need to bite the bullet and finish already. (For those curious, I've been eyeballing some removable wallpaper for an accent wall. I'm very excited).
- Go out to lunch with colleagues with some regularity. I'm embarrassed to admit that in a year and a half I've gone out to lunch with colleagues only once and we didn't even sit down to eat together because of COVID. I like chatting with my coworkers, and I like to eat food. I don't know why it has taken me so long to do both at the same time.

Of course, I still have my normal job duties to attend to this summer, but I'm looking forward to some slower months, to spending some time getting comfortable in my institution. I hope you will consider carving out some time to do the same. There's no need to spend all 40 of your working hours glued to your desk.

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